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INQUIRY

MAGAZINE

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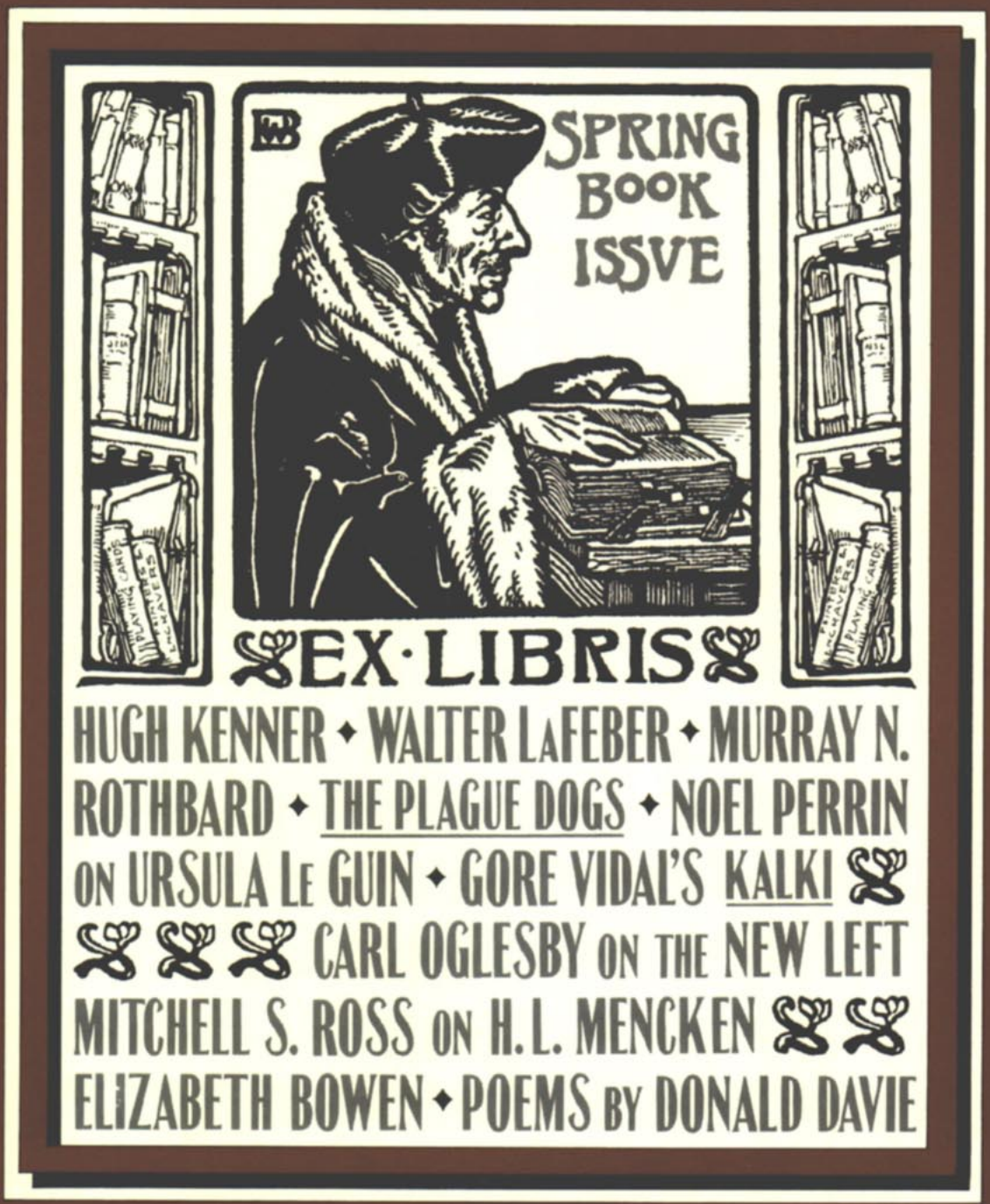
Thomas Szasz *on Tobacco Madness*

New Tales of the Canadian Mounties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"THE STUFF WRITTEN BY nine authors out of ten, it must be plain at a glance," wrote H. L. Mencken, "has as little to do with spreading the enlightenment as the state papers of the late Chester A. Arthur." Leaving aside for the moment the question of whether Chester A. Arthur was one of our greater Presidents, it should be noted that this, the summer book issue of INQUIRY, has a total of nine reviews. However, do not jump to any unwarranted conclusions. We have reason to believe that Mencken himself would have liked this issue, especially the review about himself.

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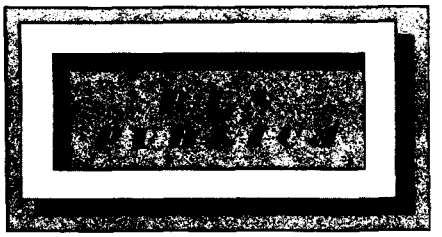

Of course you can trust us

■ Three former heads of the Central Intelligence Agency told a Senate committee today that it needed to tighten proposed charter legislation covering intelligence activities so as to protect national security information and the lives and operations of secret agents. . . .

[Former CIA director George] Bush said he was concerned that the bill contained "condemnatory language" concerning past intelligence activities. "Mistakes were made," he said. "They have long since been corrected, but this bill connotes, to me at least, that the Congress feels the problems may still exist."

Mr. Bush's testimony followed a pattern set yesterday by Clark Clifford, the former Secretary of Defense, who urged the committee to delete language in the bill that prohibits political assassination, torture, germ warfare and the violent overthrow of a democratic government. He said he felt such language was "demeaning" to the United States and that properly authorized operations would not use such techniques.

—*New York Times, Apr. 6, 1978*

On the other hand, neither do we

■ In a response to President Carter's decision to defer production of neutron weapons, Leonid I. Brezhnev announced today that the Soviet Union would "not begin production" of the enhanced-radiation warheads unless the United States did. . . .

President Carter today rejected a proposal by Leonid I. Brezhnev for a joint ban on neutron weapons. . . . "The Soviets have no use for a neutron weapon," the President said. . . .

—*New York Times, Apr. 26, 1978*

Theodore Levitt is a professor at the Harvard Business School

■ What's needed is that almost irresponsibly massive infusions of money become almost irresponsibly available for large and diverse numbers of moderately plausible proposals for energy-crisis alleviation. The Congress and the Department of Energy can get things moving by eagerly spending a great deal more, and a lot faster. At most, one needs only to guard against obvious thieves.

—THEODORE LEVITT, *in the New York Times, Apr. 28, 1978*

Why they were stringing papers between Pittsburgh and Denver is beyond us

■ The Chicago office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation has nearly 7.7 million pages of files on suspected "subversive" and "extremist" groups and individuals—enough to make a stack more than twice as high as the World Trade Center or a string reaching from Pittsburgh to Denver.

—*Washington Post, Apr. 9, 1978*

Evidently

■ Four Justice Department prosecutors Thursday accused Atty. Gen. Griffin B. Bell of thwarting an investigation of powerful FBI officials on charges of illegal break-ins, wiretaps, mail thefts, coverups and perjury. . . .

The four attorneys, in a rare public denunciation of their superior, told a Senate appropriations subcommittee that Bell had created a double standard of justice that damaged the integrity of the Justice Department.

Led by William L. Gardner, chief of the criminal section in the Justice Department's civil rights division, the lawyers said Bell had deprived them of vital investigative tools, such as perjury prosecutions, which prevented them from obtaining the truth from uncooperative FBI witnesses.

—*Los Angeles Times, Apr. 28, 1978*

■ Atty. Gen. Griffin B. Bell, meeting with FBI agents angered by the indictment of three of their former leaders, urged them Friday to "get rid of this hangdog attitude that somebody's after you. . . .

"I'm not after you," Bell said. "Nobody can get after you unless they get through me."

—*Los Angeles Times, Apr. 22, 1978*

And none too soon

■ President Idi Amin of Uganda, under whose regime at least 250,000 people reportedly have been murdered or have disappeared, announced Monday the establishment of a human rights commission in his East African nation.

—*Los Angeles Times, Apr. 4, 1978*

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A note from the publisher

Welcome, Politicks readers

WE TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO welcome the former subscribers of *Politicks* who are now receiving *INQUIRY*. *Politicks*, unhappily, ceased publication in May. The demise of such a promising magazine is unfortunate, but we are pleased that Tom Morgan and the staff of *Politicks* selected *INQUIRY* as the magazine they felt came closest to achieving their ambitious editorial and journalistic objectives.

No two magazines are the same, of course, but we believe that our new readers will like *INQUIRY* for many of the same reasons they liked *Politicks*. They should feel quite at home with our editorial philosophy.

In our premiere issue last November, we described ourselves this way: "We are neither Left nor Right, Liberal nor Conservative—nor, certainly, are we in the middle. In a political world increasingly characterized by state socialism and state capitalism, we find no common ground with either. In fact, we believe that the most serious ailments of modern society—war, imperialism, centralization, and social control—are a direct result of these political systems. . . . What distinguishes our editorial point of view from that of most other present day journals is our belief in the necessary limits of government power and in the natural and inalienable right of all men and women to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." ❏

FBI lawlessness

Political maneuvers

THE CRIMINAL INDICTMENTS AGAINST FBI officials L. Patrick Gray, W. Mark Felt, and Edward S. Miller, together with disciplinary actions proposed within the FBI, are but the latest and sorriest chapter in Attorney General Griffin B. Bell's mishandling of FBI lawlessness.

In March 1977, a team of lawyers from the Justice Department's civil rights division recommended the prosecution of six low- and middle-level FBI officials for authorizing or committing break-ins against friends and relatives of Weather Underground members. The plan proposed by the team of civil rights division attorneys called for a sequence of prosecutions that would begin at the lowest level and work upward. The first indictment—of John J. Kearney, the supervisor of a local break-in squad in New York City—came on April 7, 1977. Bell began to backpedal shortly thereafter when he announced that he had authorized Kearney's indictment only "reluctantly." By July, Bell was saying that the Kearney indictment was a novel and unsettling precedent. He also noted that his mail was running more than 100 to 1 against prosecuting Kearney. The following month the Justice Department decided not to indict one of Kearney's immediate supervisors. This decision effectively sabotaged the plan to move up the chain of command.

This March, documents were discovered that showed that officials in Washington had known and approved of the break-ins organized by Kearney.This lent credibility to the earlier claim by William C. Sullivan, formerly the number-three man in the FBI, that he had once relayed an order from J. Edgar Hoover to Kearney, instructing Kearney to use "any means necessary" to find the Weather fugitives.

The Carter administration thereupon made explicit its view that those who were following orders should not be prosecuted for the break-ins. The charges against Kearney were dismissed, and charges were brought against Gray, Felt, and Miller. Bell acted as if he hoped that letting Kearney off and indicting the higher-ups would mollify the FBI. Instead, the seemingly incorrigible FBI agents demonstrated in support of their former bosses.

J. Wallace LaPrade, former head of the FBI's field office in New York City, then met with the press to denounce disciplinary measures taken against him and to reveal that the FBI is still committing burglaries. LaPrade explained that the FBI was taking what once were considered domestic cases and calling them counterintelligence matters involving a foreign power. This shuffling of cases from one category to another makes legal the warrantless wiretaps and burglaries that the FBI continues to conduct. Although this redefinition of categories was done in 1976 under the Ford administration, the acceptance of the new categories by Carter's Justice Department and its defense of such "national security" break-ins make Bell as despicable as Gray or Felt.

The lesson of the FBI case, thus far, is that Carter's Justice Department is no less political than Nixon's. The erratic announcement and withdrawal of indictments—where there was evidence that would have justified bringing charges—make clear that Bell was acting only for political reasons. Bell's statements that the FBI defendants had conducted the break-ins under mitigating circumstances are themselves astounding, and raise the question of whether the Justice Department was ever committed to vigorous prosecution. The Justice Department's decision to bring charges only against three officials from the Nixon-Ford era does not suffice. Its decision to exempt from prosecution those who had only followed orders shows a fundamental disrespect for the rule of law and moral responsibility. ❏

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Getting out of Korea?

TWENTY FIVE YEARS AFTER THE armistice that ended the Korean War, 32,000 American ground troops remain in South Korea. And it looks like they will stay there indefinitely. On April 21, President Jimmy Carter, who last year said he would pull all U.S. ground forces out of Korea, announced that this year's withdrawal would be limited to 800 soldiers and 2600 support troops. At the same time, he revealed that the United States would *add* 12 F-4 fighters to squadrons already stationed there. And, as if to punctuate Carter's announcement, the House Armed Services Committee voted on April 26 to prohibit a Korean pull-out until there is a peace settlement between the North and the South. Carter's withdrawal plan, born last spring amid such furor, has died a quiet death.

The standard argument for the American military presence in South Korea has been that the United Stated needed to protect South Korea against Communist aggression. Underlying this argument is the assumption that the United States should police the world, a notion that we reject. But this aside, the argument is factually incorrect. The day is long past when South Korea required outside help to protect itself against the possibility of an attack from the North. The Republic of Korea today has double the population of its northern neighbor and possesses a vastly superior industrial base—strengths which it has mobilized into military advantage. Almost all military analysts, inside the government and out, believe that the ROK could repulse an attack. Gone, too, is the time—if there ever was one—when the ROK could be portrayed as a "Free World" nation struggling to protect its liberties from Communist tyranny. Like its northern neighbor, President Park Chung Hee's dictatorial regime has won international notoriety for jailing, torturing, and killing political opponents, and for its corrupt and coercive economic policies. Of course, Congress is quite familiar with Park's contempt for democratic institutions—some congressmen carried the evidence to the bank—but this hasn't kept it from giving him exactly what he wanted: a permanent American military presence in South Korea.

We think the time has come for the United States to get out of Korea altogether. As Earl C. Ravenal showed in an analysis published here last fall [*INQUIRY*, Dec. 5, 1977], our commitment to South Korea costs us $13 billion a year. This includes not only the dollars we spend to equip and maintain the units in Korea, but also the money we pay for the men and weapons that are held ready to meet the contingency of another Korean civil war. If we canceled our security treaty with South Korea, we could save more than 10 percent of the defense budget.

More important than saving money, however, is saving lives. Too many Americans have already paid with their lives to protect nonexistent Korean freedoms. And too many Koreans' lives have been put in danger by the mad arms race on the peninsula, a contest for which the United States must bear a major responsibility. Today, there are more U.S. and ROK forces in the South than there were at the time of the armistice in 1953; by contrast, the number of Communist forces has been halved. In addition, the United States has introduced into Korea large numbers of increasingly deadly weapons, including nuclear bombs and warheads. Three times since the end of the Korean War, the United States has financed military modernization programs for the ROK, each time driving North Korea to respond in kind. In all, the United States has given Seoul over $7.5 billion in aid and equipment, more than three times the amount the North Koreans have received from the Soviet Union and China. And if Carter's plans are eventually approved, the United States will provide the South Koreans with another $2 billion for military purposes. The United States can, and should, stop fueling this lethal and dangerous military build-up.

The time is ripe for a total and unconditional American withdrawal from Korea. The contending Korean regimes have reached military balance, though at a distressingly high level of lethal force. Today, South Korea has the economic and military strength to stand on its own without the fear of blackmail from the North. North Korea has shown a willingness to enter into talks with the United States about political issues on the peninsula. (To date, however, the United States has rigidly rejected these overtures.) Only Congress and the President block the way out of Korea. ❏

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THOMAS SZASZ

New addictions for old

EVERYONE MUST SURELY know by now that Joseph Califano, secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, formerly a confirmed cigarette addict, has become an anti-cigarette addict.* Although smoking and anti-smoking are now much in the news, two aspects of this business seem to have been somewhat neglected—namely, the dependence of both the supporters and the opponents of smoking on government subsidies, and the lesson implicit in the history of the promotion and prohibition of smoking. Herewith are some observations about each.

At present the government is looting the citizenry (smokers and nonsmokers alike) to the tune of $65 million annually in agricultural subsidies for the tobacco industry. While such price supports do not subsidize smokers by making cigarettes less expensive (indeed, they have the opposite effect), they do support the smoking habit indirectly. By guaranteeing a price floor for tobacco, the government symbolizes its approval—something more important than a direct subsidy—of the cultivation of that crop and its determination to guarantee the continuing prosperity of that segment of agriculture.

Now that Secretary Califano is an avid anti-smoker, his habit is subsidized by the taxpayer quite directly. Moreover, Califano's new addiction is far more dangerous to society at large than was his old one—for no one is as fanatical as an ex-addict who is high on abstinence. While a tax on cigarettes loots only the smokers, a tax for a campaign against cigarettes loots everyone. Intoxicated with the righteousness of his cause, Califano has already announced the creation of an Office of Smoking and Health with an appropriation of $23 million for the 1979 campaign against smoking. No doubt, he will try to funnel ever-larger chunks of tax monies into supporting his new habit.

Secretary Califano emphasizes that he considers the tobacco subsidy "political" and has no intention of interfering with it. Neither does the current president of the American Cancer Society, Dr. R. Wayne Rundles. When Dr. Rundles, professor of medicine at Duke University (in the heart of tobacco country) was elected last November, he declared that the Society "will continue to stress education and research rather than try to end federal price supports for tobacco." Even the National Cancer Institute is subtly pro-smoking: it spent $25 million of the taxpayers' money on a program to develop a "safer cigarette." Although such a program would appear to be the responsibility of private individuals or voluntary groups, or of the tobacco industry, that is not the view of Dr. Gio Gori, the head of NCI's "safe cigarette program." Explained Gori: "Our efforts to develop cigarettes with less tar and nicotine may help the tobacco industry, but it will benefit the country's 55 million smokers more."

With that project, the American government has assumed the burden of mitigating the bad effects of a specific bad habit. But why stop with the effort to develop a safer cigarette? Why not also develop safer booze—a drug that simulates the psychophysiological effect of alcohol but does not cause cirrhosis of the liver? Clearly, the technological—and political—possibilities of making the unsafe habits of some people safe at the expense of everyone else are virtually limitless.

The campaign against smoking has created the widespread impression that physicians are solidly against the habit. That is not so. Mental health professionals not only continue to smoke in large numbers, they also continue to support smoking as "therapeutic." Dr. Norman Tabachnick, a psychiatrist at the University of California School of Medicine in Los Angeles, asserts that smoking relieves anxiety and helps the patient maintain an identity. Dr. Walter Menninger, of the famed Menninger Clinic, states that smoking relieves tension. Dr. Peter Bourne, the President's personal psychiatric expert on drugs, emphasizes that there are known and unknown beneficial effects from smoking. In this connection, it is important to recall that the surgeon general's celebrated 1964 report acknowledges that "the significant beneficial effects of smoking occur primarily in the area of mental health." Perhaps in order to be consistent with their beliefs, mental health workers smoke significantly more than do other professionals. For example, a study reported at the 1976 meeting of the American Cancer Society revealed that among high school personnel, "guidance counselors smoke the most."

THE PROMOTION-USE AND the prohibition-avoidance of various mind-altering substances (described in detail in *Ceremonial Chemistry*) constitute an integral—albeit a remarkably neglected—part of cultural and political history. I list below, without internal comment, some of the highlights of the history, especially recent American history, of the campaign for and against smoking:

1493. The use of tobacco is introduced into Europe by Columbus and his crew returning from America. By the middle of the seventeenth century, efforts to stamp out the habit—in Europe and the Ottoman Empire—are ferocious but fruitless. Sultan Murad IV decrees the death penalty for smoking. According to a contemporary observer, "Wherever the Sultan went on his travels or on a military expedition, his halting places were always distinguished by a terrible increase in the number of executions. . . . Nevertheless the passion for smoking still persisted."

1912. Many (alcohol) prohibitionists extend their campaign to cigarettes. A writer in *Century* magazine declares: "Morphine is the legitimate consequence of alcohol, and alcohol is the legitimate consequence of tobacco. Cigarettes, drink, opium, is the logical and regular series." A physician warns: "There is no energy more destructive of soul, mind, and body, or more subver-

THOMAS SZASZ, a contributing editor, writes a monthly column for INQUIRY. His most recent book is The Myth of Psychotherapy.

**For the sake of brevity I am using the terms "addict" and "addiction" in their conventional senses. The reader who is interested in my linguistic and moral objections to these terms may consult my book,* Ceremonial Chemistry.

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sive of good morals, than the cigarette. The fight against the cigarette is a fight for civilization."

1921. The sale of cigarettes is illegal in 14 states; 92 anti-cigarette bills are pending in 28 states. Wherever cigarettes are illegal, the sale of bootleg cigarettes flourishes.

1963. Tobacco sales in the United States total $8.08 billion, of which $3.3 billion go to federal, state, and local governments. A news release from the tobacco industry proudly states: "Tobacco products pass across sales counters more frequently than anything else—except money."

1964. The surgeon general's famous warning about tobacco smoking is issued. The American Medical Association accepts $10 million from a group of tobacco companies; coincidentally, the AMA opposes the Federal Trade Commission's order requiring that cigarettes be labeled as a health hazard.

1966. The Agriculture Department spends $210,000 to subsidize cigarette commercials in Japan, Thailand, and Austria, and pays $106,000 to Warner Brothers to insert scenes designed to stimulate cigarette smoking in a travelogue that will be distributed in eight countries.

1976. The Agriculture Department reports that Americans smoked 620 billion cigarettes, almost 13 billion more than in 1975, and 84 billion more than in 1970. America's cigarette production for the year was 700 billion, of which 62 billion were for export, and 10 billion (tax-exempt) went to American servicemen stationed overseas. Exports grew by more than 20 percent, from 50.2 billion in 1975 to 62 billion in 1976.

1977. Former Surgeons General Dr. Luther Terry and Dr. Jesse Steinfeld, together with a group of prominent anti-smokers, petition the FDA, requesting: "That the agency recognize its authority over cigarettes as a drug . . . under the broad definition in the Food and Drug Act. . . . and that the agency restrict the sale of cigarettes to pharmacies." The FDA replies that "nicotine is not a drug because the sellers of tobacco have never claimed it is a drug."

1978. According to a survey published in the *New England Journal of Medicine,* the cost of smoking and alcohol abuse in the United States is $60 billion a year, or about 25 percent of the total cost of all illnesses. In 1976, direct health care costs attributable to smoking amounted to $8.2 billion.

1978. According to a study published by the Worldwatch Institute of Washington, D.C., "Consumers the world over spend . . . $85 billion to $100 billion each year on tobacco." The Institute's report identifies the "Peking [mainland Chinese] government monopoly" as the world's largest cigarette manufacturer, and notes that "in the United States, cigarette smoking now causes 320,000 premature deaths a year and $20 billion in such hidden social costs as medical expenses, lost working time, and fire damage."

ALL SOCIETIES MAKE USE of various substances for ceremonial as well as medicinal purposes. In primitive societies, these two aims and functions are indistinguishable. The witch doctor's mask, dance, and herbal medicine combine and conflate the ostensibly empirical and overtly religious dimensions of healing. In modern societies, these two aims and functions are distinguishable, but the distinction is usually repressed: in the physician's prescription of tranquilizers, the ceremonial aspect of healing is repressed; in the politician's promotion of tobacco, the medicinal aspect is repressed. This situation is at once consequence and cause. It is the consequence of modern man's having lost touch with the significance of community and communion—that is, with the ceremonial and religious apsects of life; in turn, it is the cause of his attributing absurd powers of good or evil to his officially nonmedicinal drugs (and even to the paraphernalia associated with their use, like lighters, pipes, syringes, and so forth).

People in Western societies, and especially the American people, are playing a dangerous game. They preach political freedom and personal responsibility, but they practice medical despotism and medicinal irresponsibility. If anything is a drug, then nicotine—the mendacity of the FDA and the entire American government notwithstanding—is a drug. Whether it is considered therapeutic or toxic depends on who uses it, on how it is used, and on who has the power to define what constitutes a desirable or undesirable drug. ❏

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NICHOLAS VON HOFFMAN

The President's analyst

IN 1968, THE TOWN COUNCIL of Rockledge, Florida, a metropolis of 14,000 souls on the banks of the Banana River, drafted an ordinance prohibiting public opinion samplers from asking inhabitants about their political preferences. The prime mover behind the ordinance was Mayor R. W. Grady. His candidate, George Romney, an ex-governor of Michigan and a figure of some national standing, was forced to pull out of the New Hampshire Republican primary after low showings in the public opinion polls.

"It was just a crime for a man to withdraw from a race on the basis of a poll, before the people had a chance to vote for or against him," Mayor Grady declared, and you can still hear the amens. No player in the contemporary political game is less loved than the pollster, not even the advertising man–candidate packager. We are gleeful when pollsters make mistakes; we celebrate their prophecies gone awry. People who are a generation and a half too young to have a clear idea who Thomas E. Dewey was know full well that George Gallup predicted he would whip Harry S. Truman in 1948.

As Jimmy Carter's pollster, Pat Caddell is unusually influential for his 27 years. He carries the special onus of being the closest public opinion sampler to a President since the early days of World War II when Hadley Cantril—the first of the calling to be let into the White House—was advising FDR. One of Caddell's two public opinion firms can boast of customers like Exxon, Sears, the atomic power industry, and the government of Saudi Arabia.

With clients like these, that loosely defined phrase, conflict of interest, has been slung around Caddell's neck, and there is no denying that his close association with a sitting President hardly serves to scare away business. Clark Clifford, thought to be the richest lawyer in Washington, a city of very rich lawyers, can tell you he won't take your case—and charge you $50,000 for such consultation—on the strength of his having been Harry Truman's number one White House boy and LBJ's most savvy grayhead. (After Clifford's recent appearance before a Senate committee as Bert Lance's lawyer, the old boy is probably charging $100,000 to pick up the phone and tell you to take your business elsewhere.) Without a doubt, the best situation you can get in Washington is to have a private business of your own at the same time that you are regarded as a close presidential adviser.

Major corporations hire Caddell to supply them with information about people's attitudes and opinions. The suspicion has been voiced, however, that he may use—or at least his clients may hope he'll use—his White House access to advocate policies favorable to them. That would make him the country's most extraordinary unregistered lobbyist, since some of his clients have antithetical interests. "If I put them all in one room, they'd tear each other to pieces," Caddell says, and it is most likely so.

Actually, this young man's corporate customers began gravitating to him after the 1972 presidential campaign. That year Caddell, still a Harvard undergraduate, went to work for George McGovern when the South Dakota senator was a 100 to 1 shot with a two percent name recognition factor. Caddell and his advice were credited with being important reasons that the man who couldn't possibly get the nomination got it. In the general election, while Nixon was destroying McGovern 49 states to 1, the careers of some of the McGovern people were being enhanced. At the same time,

WARD SCHUMAKER

NICHOLAS VON HOFFMAN, a contributing editor of INQUIRY, is author of Left at the Post *and coauthor of* Tales from the Margaret Mead Taproom.

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some of those people were discovering that moral victories aren't the fun they're cracked up to be. In Carter, a number of these ex-McGovernites saw a winning candidate. Caddell, with his splendidly self-trained nose for smelling out vote potential, joined the Carter campaign by the end of 1975, even before the 1976 Iowa Democratic precinct caucuses, when the candidate's nomination chances were first taken seriously.

"Who's ahead and who's behind is really an irrelevant question," Caddell says of the ability to handicap winners and losers, although that is still what most people think of when they think of polltaking. The first poll or straw vote we know of was of that kind. As reported in the July 24, 1824 issue of the *Harrisburg Pennsylvanian,* a poll of Wilmington, Delaware, voters gave Andrew Jackson 355 votes to John Quincy Adams's 169, with Henry Clay trailing badly with a miserable score of 19. Trying to find out who's ahead was the major use polling was put to for a long time, although FDR did lean on Cantril to give him clues as to public attitude. Generally, politicians thought of the activity as Leonard Hall, the Eisenhower-era chairman of the Republican National Committee, did: "If no one else does, politicians and spenders read polls. The big contributors like to know where their man stands, and just like at the $2 window, no one likes to put his money on a loser." So if you're running for office, and you're soliciting money, it helps to come begging with "good polls" in hand.

But that isn't primarily what Caddell, who is paid a fee by the Democratic National Committee, does for Jimmy Carter. Caddell operates as a substitute for the informational system that once was supplied, no matter how imperfectly, by political parties. In times of yore, political managers could tell not only who was ahead, but what people were thinking, through either their party organizations or the Grange and the other institutions of rural America. With the rise of the cities came the flowering of the precinct organization, complete with the precinct captain who inscribed in his little book the name of every voter in his small area of responsibility. In those days, ward and precinct organizations didn't confine their activities to election time; they met weekly throughout the year so that the higher-ups were getting a frequent, if not constant, stream of information about public sentiment.

*WHAT CADDELL DOES TO-*day is mix numbers, questions, memory, nuance, and an experienced judgment so that he can say an issue does or doesn't have "structural strength." Which means, for example, in the case of the Panama Canal, that even if a voter is opposed to the treaty, the chances are he really does not care enough about it to remember a yea-voting senator and punish him on election day. No matter how accomplished one is at opinion polling—and it is not easily done well—conclusions of the sort Caddell has made on the politics of the canal question aren't in the numbers, but in what you bring to the numbers.

The suspicion has been voiced that Pat Caddell may use his White House access to advocate policies that are favorable to his customers.

Caddell will concede that candidates like Ford and Carter stand too close to each other to enter into really serious disagreements. From the candidate's point of view, according to Caddell, running for office is the process of staying out of trouble while hoping one's opponent will bobble. In a situation like the Ford-Carter race, where the disagreements between the two seemed significant only to a few special interest group members and the candidates' campaign staffs, Caddell argues that the election must be more "theme" than debate. The analogy in advertising is not so much to packaging as to what's called "positioning."

For instance, the beer industry has been going through formidable tussles for position during the past few years. By positioning itself as the beer of athletes and musky bonhomie, Miller Lite has moved from a logy number seven in sales to a fast number two. Schlitz has responded with James Coburn clinking his spurs, suggesting that the cool and the tough drink the Milwaukee label, while Anheuser-Busch has tried to position its Natural Light with themes calculated to attract the woman beer drinker. This positioning nonsense can only exist because the beers themselves are indistinguishable to the taste. An important difference in product would make positioning very difficult. Coke and Pepsi, for example, wrestle for position because it's so hard to tell them apart.

"The comparison may be valid," Caddell concedes. "Carter got elected because he filled a vacuum," in a way not so different from the vacuum which Miller Lite brand managers identified and filled in their market. But Caddell insists that this didn't stem from evil and manipulative power lusts. Instead, he says, it comes from the state of the electorate and the advanced decomposition of the political parties. Caddell is trying to fight off the label of the mindless, amoral, electoral technician. Given the themes selected for the Carter campaign—themes no more compellingly connected to the Carter we now see in the White House than *macho* is to Schlitz—Caddell may not be able to slip the derogatory label.

The fact that there may be no other way to run successfully for President isn't going to be a sufficient explanation for many people when they figure out that Carter became the "anti-Washington" candidate as a market positioning device. He grabbed that spot off in the primaries at Caddell's suggestion, leaving Udall to be "the liberal" and Jackson "the conservative." (During the campaign, some of President Ford's people also urged Ford to run against Washington.)

The idea isn't as preposterous as it sounds in an election contest in which each candidate waited for his opponent to make a slip of the tongue. (Remember Carter's "ethnic purity" and Ford's "free Poland"?) John Lindsay won a second term as mayor of New York by campaigning against himself, City Hall, and municipal bureaucracy. This strategy caused some retching by cynics, but it went over well with the idealists who may be impervious to position in beer merchandizing, but who get snookered every time by the kind of political marketing a chap like Caddell excels at.

"It is my thesis," says Caddell, "that governing with public approval requires a continuing political campaign." Hence we have Carter and family strolling hand-in-hand down Pennsylvania Avenue on inauguration day,

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and hence we have the perpetuation of the anti-Washington theme in essentially false dispatches about how White House personnel don't accept invitations to Georgetown dinner parties. In that light, the publicized escapades of a Hamilton Jordan, whether accurate or not, help to emphasize the position of Carter people as the real American auslanders, marooned in the hostile and decadent city on the banks of the Potomac. Caddell, who by this time is as much of a Washington outsider as the chief lobbyist for U. S. Steel or Al Ullman, the chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee, still peddles the picture of himself and his colleagues as Honest Dan'l Boones adventuring among the dangerously overcouth. People believe what suits them and helps them, however, and so it's best not to confuse this kind of manipulation with deceit. The people who put the *macho* into Schlitz may actually believe it's the beer that makes your *cojónes* grow.

Caddell hints that Jerry Brown has been more successful than Carter in delineating the important questions of the day in a way that leads the voters to listen.

WHETHER CARTER HIMself lives in the post liberal-conservative universe Caddell speaks of is not so certain. Caddell is clearly of the Jerry Brown generation. Although Brown seems to occupy the same nebulously threatening position in Carterite thinking that the Kennedy family held for both the Nixon and Johnson people, Caddell implies that the California governor has been more successful than his own man in delineating the questions of the day in a way that leads the voters to listen and believe. In addition, the issue—growth versus no growth—which Caddell calls the most "potentially explosive," is decidedly Jerry Brownish.

Caddell is too young and too new to power to be tired or disappointed. However, he has come to realize that the difficulties of holding the White House are far vaster than they appeared before last election day. Instead of being awe-struck and impressed by the power of Carter's office, Caddell is worried that the Nixon-Ford legacy is one of a damaged presidency. "Carter has come to the office at a time when the presidency is weakest," he says. "Large chunks of the office have been taken away by Congress, by the press. There are chunks of it all over town"—this seems to me what used to be called separation of powers. But he insists, "You wouldn't believe how frightened White House staff people are to do the simplest thing."

Although he functions as a national precinct captain (he prefers to say he serves as "a mirror" in which those in power can see themselves), Caddell, unlike many around Washington, doesn't imply that the White House always takes his advice. Without exactly saying it, he lets you know he thinks it was a mistake for Carter, the inheritor of a lamed and maimed office, to take on so many large issues without first winning a few small ones to give the illusion of momentum building up. "The administration has suffered from a lack of victories," says Caddell. As a result, he points out, "When the White House calls and says 'X,' there is such a difference in the way they react [at the other end of the line] now and the way they did in 1970."

It is for that reason that Caddell believes, "The President needs victories against other institutions, not against the opposition over programs." But in Caddell's view, what the President has gotten is defeats by other institutions, most conspicuously in the Lance case. To Caddell, the Lance episode had little to do with ethics in government—he points out that Lance was never even accused of misconduct during his directorship of the Office of Management and Budget; for Caddell, it was a power struggle between the presidency and other forces who see their role as containing White House power. He's not paranoid about the Lance matter, but compares it to the Civil War in the sense that the controversy grew much larger than those who originally raised it had intended, until it took on a life of its own. "If Bert had survived, it would have been a massive victory for the institution of the presidency." But Bert didn't, and that, Caddell hints, has left Carter crawling and groping, unhappily aware that he has had to back off from his campaign promises—a President without the political strength to wrestle himself on top of major issues.

To develop that strength, the President must lick the "linkage problem," the feeling Caddell discerns among those who vote that, whatever the outcome of the elections, their will cannot find expression. As the President's pollster, the national precinct captain, Caddell offers himself as the substitute for the missing linkage.

But viewed either as a pollster or as a precinct captain, Caddell is functioning as a feedback mechanism, as one who accepts opinion and tries to maneuver around it. That makes it insuperably difficult to give much of Carter's thematic material the sort of persuasive embodiment that could affect policy. The proposals for changes in Civil Service rules leave us miles behind the more glorious antibureaucratic themes played by the White House orchestra. Obviously, no real attack on bureaucracy or Civil Service sloth can be mounted without first changing what these people and their agencies are supposed to do: that is, advancing a different role for government. For that, there is no organized constituency, and there is no way that a primarily reflexive, feedback politician like Caddell can help to create one.

Disarmament, human rights, balanced budgets—all of these universally well-received themes in the Carter medley must fail to be translated into effective specifics because the President and his people can find nothing more than overly broad, overly wishy-washy support which is completely useless for getting things done. Therefore, they almost have to use this thematic material for mere political tone poems, and go with the advice of a man like Caddell, a man whose forte is accepting the givens and knowing how to dipsydoodle between them. If you don't like it, remember that it sells.

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The Mounties are a national myth. But recent revelations show that they break the law and abuse civil liberties.

By GEOFFREY STEVENS

THE ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE ARE a national myth—perhaps the only national myth that Canada has. The "Mounties" are the stuff of which nostalgia is made. Mounties in their scarlet dress tunics, blue breeches, and gold piping. Mounties who "always get their man." Mounties fighting the elements with their faithful dog teams. Mounties with their motto, *Maintiens le Droit,* bringing law and order—and, more importantly, *respect* for law and order—to the thinly populated northern half of the continent.

But something is happening to the myth. It was taken for granted that the Mounties, Canada's national police force, stood for everything that was good and decent in a world that was far from good or decent. But day by day, unhappy revelation by unhappy revelation, they are being exposed to be no better than the world in which they operate. Mounties break the law. Mounties abuse civil liberties. The Mounties have become a rogue police force; they are out of control; they are functioning as though they were a state within a state.

The RCMP's major troubles can be traced back to October 1970. Terrorists belonging to the Front de Libération du Québec (FLQ) first kidnapped James Cross, the British trade commissioner in Montreal, then Pierre Laporte, the minister of Labor in the provincial government of Quebec. Before the FLQ crisis—or October crisis, as it was known—ended, the terrorists had murdered Laporte. The kidnappers released Cross only after Canadian authorities agreed to allow them safe passage to Cuba.

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Like the Quebec provincial police and the Montreal city police, the RCMP was caught flatfooted by the crisis. The Mounties' knowledge of the FLQ, its members, its methods, and its hiding places, was almost nonexistent. Finding itself with an impotent police force, the federal government invoked the War Measures Act. This did not constitute martial law, and it did not suspend civil liberties across the country. But it did outlaw the FLQ and empower the police and the army to round up suspected FLQ members and detain them without charges for a short period of time. All told, 439 people were picked up; only 60 were charged, and not one was convicted.

The government, quite rightly, blamed the RCMP for the fiasco. And the Mounties set out to make sure they would never again be caught so unprepared, so vulnerable to criticism. The results of that effort have been truly impressive. Today, the Mounties stand accused—primarily, but not exclusively, in Quebec—of breaking and entering; stealing documents; illegally opening mail; bugging private citizens (including, inadvertently, their own civilian boss, the federal solicitor general); making improper use of confidential income tax records; gaining unauthorized access to medical files; spying on politicians and compiling dossiers about their private lives; stealing dynamite (lest the public think the threat of terrorism had evaporated); illegally detaining people and subjecting them to "physical and moral violence"; publishing phony terrorist communiqués (to sow dissension among radical groups); and even of burning down a barn (where the Mounties believed members of the FLQ were planning to meet with members of the Black Panthers from the United States). The RCMP did manage, as far as is known, to smash the FLQ. In the process, however, the Mounties sacrificed their own reputation.

At the moment, the methods of the RCMP—mainly its security service—are being investigated by four separate inquiries:

- In Alberta, the Laycraft Inquiry. Mr. Justice James Laycraft, of the Supreme Court of Alberta, is investigating the affairs in Western Canada (including allegations of bribery and payoffs) of the Royal American Shows, a Florida-based carnival company. This inquiry has revealed that the Mounties, through a secret agreement with the federal Department of National Revenue, have regular access to personal income tax returns which, in law, are supposed to be strictly confidential. It has also been determined that the police engage in illegal electronic eavesdropping (bugging without a warrant). This included an incident in December 1975, when the RCMP secretly bugged a hotel room in Winnipeg where three policemen from Edmonton were interviewing two people about Royal American Shows.
- In Ontario, the Krever Inquiry. Mr. Justice Horace Krever, of the Supreme Court of Ontario, is investigating breaches of the confidentiality of medical records maintained by a provincial government agency, the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (OHIP). At first, in late 1977, the Mounties explained that all they sought and obtained was information to establish the whereabouts of suspects. The hypothetical example given at the time was of a person who broke his leg while fleeing the scene of a crime; from OHIP, the police would obtain the names of all persons who had been treated for broken legs in the area on that day. A few months later, however, it turned out that the RCMP was actually obtaining the psychiatric records of individuals being investigated for security reasons.
- In Quebec, the Keable Inquiry. Most of the sensational disclosures about RCMP wrongdoing have come out of this aggressive inquiry conducted by Jean Keable, a lawyer who was once an unsuccessful candidate for the Parti Québécois, the separatist party which came to power in Quebec in 1976. The Keable Inquiry is politically motivated; it is a transparent attempt to discredit one of the most visible institutions of the central government. It has succeeded so thoroughly that the federal government made four attempts in court last fall to halt the inquiry, on the constitutional ground that a provincial government does not have the jurisdiction to investigate a federal police force. Finally, this spring, Ottawa managed to persuade the Supreme Court of Canada to halt the Keable investigation.
- In Ottawa, the McDonald Royal Commission. This three-member commission, created in July 1977 and chaired by Mr. Justice David McDonald, also of the Supreme Court of Alberta, is the federal government's answer to the Keable Inquiry. It is an attempt—so far unsuccessful—to disprove the notion that the Trudeau government's real purposes in opposing Jean Keable were to cover up illegal RCMP activities, and to disguise the extent to which the federal Cabinet had lost control over, and even knowledge of, the activities of the security service. The McDonald Commission has a serious credibility problem. While the Keable Inquiry was making headlines daily, the Royal Commission stalled for five months before it opened hearings. Since then, its progress has been painfully slow; its examination of witnesses has been inept; and it has been extremely reluctant to force the RCMP and the government to make public information about RCMP methods. To make matters worse, all three commissioners have links with the ruling Liberal Party; Mr. Justice McDonald was president of the Liberal Association of Alberta before he was appointed to the bench by the Liberal government in Ottawa.

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Reinforcing suspicions that the commission is not entirely divorced from politics is the fact that it does not plan to call some of the key witnesses before July of this year; Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau is expected to hold a general election before the end of June. "If Watergate had been conducted the same way as this inquiry, Nixon would still be President," says David Gibbons, a civil liberties lawyer from Vancouver.

For all its shortcomings, however, the McDonald Royal Commission has succeeded in making the public aware of the extent of the RCMP's problems. The press—especially the *Toronto Globe and Mail* and the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation—has turned up a number of illegal or improper activities (some of them confirmed, others still awaiting confirmation or repudiation). Other complaints have poured into the McDonald Commission offices in Ottawa, Montreal, and Toronto from different parts of the country. "I wake up each morning," says Jake Howard, the commission's chief counsel, "and listen to the seven o'clock news and I hear that we have a new problem." A lot of problems—at last count between 80 and 100 separate incidents were being investigated. At its present pace, it is going to take the McDonald Commission at least two more years to get to the bottom of all of them. It will take much longer—assuming it is possible—to restore the once-proud reputation of the Mounties.

THE HISTORY OF THE FORCE IS INEXTRICABLY tied to the history of the country. In 1869, two years after Confederation, the infant Dominion government purchased the vast land holdings of the Hudson's Bay Company (now the provinces of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta, plus the Northwest Territories). It needed a national police force to control this expanse so that the Canadian Pacific Railway could be built to British Columbia. In 1873, Parliament created the North-West Mounted Police (as the RCMP was originally known), a 300-man force patterned after the Irish Mounted Constabulary. Today, the Mounties are a highly sophisticated, 19,000-member force.

The RCMP is a national police force. Its security service, which can report directly to the solicitor general and the Prime Minister without going through the commissioner of the RCMP, deals with subversion from within and without. Although under the Constitution, the administration of justice is a provincial responsibility, the criminal branch of the RCMP enforces certain federal statutes, including those dealing with narcotics, income tax, and customs and excise.

But the RCMP is more than a national police force. It is also a provincial and municipal police force. The Mounties are the provincial police in eight provinces (with the exception of Ontario and Quebec, which have their own provincial forces). They also provide, under contract, local police services in towns and villages which are too small to maintain their own forces. Approximately half of the Mounties are engaged in provincial and municipal policing. For millions of Canadians, therefore, the Mounties are as much a part of their daily lives as the postman or the milkman.

And the Mounties are revered. There's no other word for it. Schoolteachers may go on strike. Doctors may refuse to make house calls. But the Mounties are there when they are needed. They were there in September 1945, when Igor Gouzenko, a cipher clerk at the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa, defected and exposed a Communist espionage network that reached into the United States and the United Kingdom. They were there again early this year when, amid all their travails, they broke another Soviet spy ring and the government expelled 13 Russian diplomats. The Mounties may be stern, uncompromising, and unforgiving, but they are loyal, trustworthy, honest, and courageous. At any rate, this is the image, or the myth. It helps to explain why faith in the Mounties, although shaken, has not been destroyed by the current succession of scandals.

Although most of the Mounties' illegal activities grew out of the October crisis of 1970, the force's troubles did not surface until much later. Canadians followed Watergate with a detached interest and a smug feeling that "it couldn't happen here." It was not until March 1976 that it became obvious that "it" had been "happening here" all along.

The place was a courtroom in Montreal. The accused was an RCMP undercover constable, Robert Samson, who was on trial for planting a bomb near the home of a Montreal supermarket executive. This incident has never been fully explained. Samson maintained he had been acting under orders; whose orders they might have been is not known. It seems more likely that Samson's act was unconnected with his police work, although he may have been trying to reinforce his cover as a member of Montreal's radical left. At any rate, in the course of the trial Samson blurted out that he had "done worse things" for the RCMP.

On investigation, one of these "worse things" turned out to be "Operation Odd Job"—an illegal break-in during the night of October 6–7, 1972, at the offices of the Agence de Presse Libre du Québec (APLQ), a left-wing news agency, and the Movement for the Defence of Political Prisoners in Quebec (MDPPQ), another radical organization. According to testimony before the Keable Inquiry and the McDonald Commission, Operation Odd Job was a three-force undertaking—the RCMP, the provincial police of Quebec, and the

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Montreal city police. The break-in was conceived by Constable Samson and authorized by Superintendent Donald Cobb, who was then head of the RCMP security service in Montreal.

The object of the operation was to steal a letter that had been written by two of the FLQ exiles in Cuba to an official of the APLQ. The Mounties got their letter—and a good deal more. They carted off 1000 pounds of documents in hockey bags, took them to the home of an RCMP sergeant, and deposited them in his basement. They paid the sergeant's wife $35 a week, and the stolen files were guarded by her Doberman pinscher.

The APLQ, discovering the theft and correctly suspecting who had accomplished it, demanded an explanation from federal, provincial, and municipal authorities. The attorney general of Quebec replied that the provincial police had not been involved. The then solicitor general of Canada, Jean-Pierre Goyer, did not bother to reply; he had been so confident, he explained much later, that the RCMP would not be party to any illegal operation that he had not even bothered to ask the Mounties about it.

With Samson's conviction in March 1976, however, the secret was out. In May 1977, three police officers, including Donald Cobb (who had been promoted to chief superintendent and, according to the RCMP grapevine, was on his way to becoming the next commissioner of the force), pleaded guilty to participating in the break-in. In an astounding decision, the judge gave all three unconditional discharges, which means that there is no record of any conviction or guilty plea on their records. The officers returned to their jobs.

By this time, however, reports of other illegal or irregular RCMP operations were appearing in the press with increasing frequency. In Parliament, the opposition parties repeatedly demanded an official inquiry. On June 17, 1977, Solicitor General Francis Fox announced he was satisfied that there was no need for an inquiry. He told the Commons that he had received "repeated and unequivocal assurances from the RCMP that the APLQ incident was exceptional and isolated."

Trudeau compared stealing party membership lists to the situation that arises when a policeman has to pry open a window to stop the terrorist from detonating an atomic bomb.

Fox's satisfaction lasted less than three weeks. On July 6, unable to stonewall any longer, he was forced to appoint the McDonald Royal Commission. He referred to the commission a number of illegal or improper operations mounted by the RCMP, some of them grave, some simply bizarre.

In recent months, through the Keable Inquiry and the McDonald Commission, the public has been given a glimpse of how the Mounties operate behind their Boy Scout façade. The public has learned about "Operation Puma," previously known as "Operation 300"; this is a generic code name applied to what the Mounties call "clandestine searches"—in other words, raids conducted without benefit of a warrant. (Operation Odd Job was not a "Puma" operation because the police knew that the subject, the APLQ, would discover the break-in and theft.)

There was "Operation Vampire," to plant microphones for electronic surveillance and "Operation Cobra," to bug telephones—as was done to the APLQ offices before Operation Odd Job was carried out. In "Operation Cathedral," the RCMP, with the cooperation of the Post Office Department, illegally intercepted and opened private mail. Although Operation Cathedral extended over a period of 40 years (and may still be continuing), Solicitor General Fox said he was unaware of the operation until the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation revealed it last November 8.

GIVEN THE DELICATE, AT TIMES TENSE, political situation in Canada today between Pierre Trudeau's Liberal government in Ottawa and René Lévesques's Parti Québécois separatist government in Quebec City, by far the most explosive revelation has been that of "Operation Ham." This was a Puma operation—that is, a clandestine search which was meant to go undiscovered. On January 9, 1973, RCMP officers (without a court order) entered the office of a computer company in Montreal and "borrowed" a computer tape containing the membership lists of the Parti Québécois. They had the tape copied and returned the original to the company's office without being discovered. It was a successful operation in every way—except in its results. The Mounties were looking for evidence that the PQ, then in opposition in the Quebec National Assembly, was being secretly financed by a foreign power. The amount of the financing was supposed to be $350,000; the foreign power, inevitably, was supposed to be France. But the Mounties found no such evidence.

Operation Ham was by no means the only time the Mounties spied on the Parti Québécois. In the early 1970s, the RCMP kept the PQ under surveillance, trying to establish a link between the party and the terrorist FLQ. At about the same time, it also maintained surveillance on the now-defunct Waffle Movement—a loose-knit group of academics and nationalists who formed the left wing of the New Democratic Party, a social democratic party that holds 16 seats in Parliament, forms the provincial government in Saskatchewan, and formerly controlled the governments in Manitoba and British Columbia as well.

This sort of intrusion into the political process apparently continued until 1975, when Prime Minister Trudeau says he ordered the police to discontinue "systematic" surveillance of political parties. This, as the Prime Minister was quick to add, does not mean that the RCMP cannot keep "members" of political parties under surveillance if it feels it has reason to do so.

Although the RCMP scandal is as serious in the Canadian context as Watergate was in the American—indeed, probably more serious—there is a crucial difference between the two. The evidence to date has not turned up a "smoking gun." There is ample evidence of a widespread, highly effective cover-up, but it has not been established that the cover-up was ordered or orchestrated by anyone in the Trudeau Cabinet. Nor has it been established that anyone in the Cabinet authorized illegal police operations, or knew about them when they took place.

There are suspicions, of course. Following the APLQ break-in in October 1972, for example, John Starnes (then

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the director general of the security service, based in Ottawa) sent a telex message to Superintendent Cobb, the officer in Montreal who had authorized the raid. The purpose of the telex was not to censure Cobb for violating the Criminal Code; rather, it was to reprimand him for not informing Starnes before the raid took place. Starnes did not tell Cobb that the RCMP should obey the law. Instead, he instructed him to forward details of what information the break-in had produced so that Solicitor General Goyer could be briefed.

BUT DID THAT BRIEFING EVER TAKE PLACE? The memories of the principals are blurred. At the Keable Inquiry in February of this year, Starnes testified that he would be surprised if he had not informed Goyer of the break-in. William Higgitt, the commissioner of the RCMP from 1969 to 1973, said under cross-examination: "It makes me almost certain that the discussion [with Goyer] did in fact take place." Goyer, however, insists he was not told, and there the matter rests for the moment.

Other evidence suggests that although the cover-up extended to the top echelon of the RCMP, it did not go beyond the force. In December 1977, Assistant Commissioner Murray Sexsmith testified before the McDonald Royal Commission about Operation Cathedral, the illegal mail openings. He was asked why the senior RCMP officers had not informed Solicitor General Fox about Operation Cathedral before Fox made his statement in the Commons on June 17 that the APLQ break-in was an "exceptional and isolated" incident. Sexsmith was also asked why the force did not subsequently bring Operation Cathedral to the attention of the commission or the solicitor general instead of waiting until after the CBC broke the story in November. The assistant commissioner replied that Fox's statement had been discussed within the force; the officers concerned had agreed that the statement was "technically correct." By this, Sexsmith explained, he meant that the APLQ burglary was, in fact, an "isolated" incident because it was the only occasion on which the Mounties had burgled a premises, *and* carried away documents, *and* later destroyed them.

This narrow construction of the truth has been exceedingly embarrassing to the government. Early this year, Fox (who has since left the Cabinet) went back to the RCMP to make absolutely sure there were no more skeletons in the closet. On January 9, he revealed a new batch of questionable activities, including four incidents of "questionable interviewing practices" (which means abusing suspects physically or psychologically). This, Fox told the Commons, finally cleared the slate. But two days later, the McDonald Commission was told about another previously unknown incident (the facts of which have not yet been made public).

The government, however, shows surprisingly few signs of embarrassment, anger, or even concern. Trudeau has tried—in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary—to dismiss each new revelation as unimportant, as nothing more than a mistake by a junior officer. At a press conference, he described the various illegalities as the lapses of the ten thousandth person somewhere at the end of a long corridor—totally ignoring the fact that some, perhaps many, of the incidents took place with the knowledge and approval of officers who reported directly to him and to the solicitor general. In one of the oddest performances of his career, Trudeau also compared breaking into offices and stealing the membership lists of a legitimate political party to the situation that arises when a policeman has to exceed the speed limit to capture a bank robber, or pry open a window to stop a terrorist from detonating an atomic bomb in the middle of a city. "Technical" offenses is how the Prime Minister describes them.

Astonishingly, Trudeau is getting away with these evasions and rationalizations. There are three reasons why he is able to do so. First, party discipline is far stronger in the Canadian parliamentary system than it is in the U.S. congressional system. As long as Trudeau retains the support of the Liberal caucus, he cannot be defeated in the Commons,

The APLQ burglary was an "isolated" incident, the Mounties said; it was the only time they had burgled a premises, and carried away documents, and later destroyed them.

or even forced to change his approach. As long as he commands the support of the Liberal Party, he cannot be forced out of the leadership. For reasons that have much more to do with the problem of national unity than with the problem of the RCMP, Trudeau has that support, and it is stronger today than at any time since he was elected 10 years ago.

Second, Canadians do not have the same preoccupation with, and concern for, civil liberties and individual rights that Americans do. There is no Bill of Rights in the Canadian Constitution. The Canadian Bill of Rights is an ordinary statute, and the courts have been reluctant to give it precedence over other acts of Parliament. The Canadian willingness to overlook violations of individual rights was only too evident during the October crisis of 1970; according to polls taken at the time, four-fifths of Canadians approved of Trudeau's use of the War Measures Act. The October crisis revealed—and the current lack of alarm about RCMP transgression confirms—that there is a deep current of authoritarianism in Canadian society.

Third, a majority of Canadians still have faith in the Mounties, more faith than they have in politicians. Support for the RCMP is everywhere—in letters to newspapers, at public meetings, in the feedback M.P.'s receive from their constituents. To their dismay, the opposition parties discovered early in the RCMP scandal that the public regarded criticism of the government for failing to control the Mounties to be an attack on the integrity of the Mounties themselves. The prevailing attitude is that while the RCMP may break the law now and again, it wouldn't break it without good cause; and it wouldn't ever need to break the law if only the politicians would give the police the enlarged powers they need to to their job.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police are more than a national institution. They are something Canadians can believe in, and want to believe in. Right or wrong, they are a national myth. The myth may be a bit battered, but it will endure. The buttons being distributed across the country these days say it all: "Thank God We Have the RCMP." ❑

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AN INFANTILE DISORDER? The Crisis and Decline of the New Left, by Nigel Young. Westview Press, 490 pp., $19.95.

TWILIGHT OF THE YOUNG: The Radical Movements of the 1960s and Their Legacy, by Klaus Mehnert. Holt, Rinehart and Winston/Hoover Institution Press, 428 pp., $12.95.

The world before Watergate

CARL OGLESBY

THESE TWO ELEGIES ON the New Left are especially interesting because the author of each was a participant-observer of the Movement both in the United States and in his native country—Germany in Mehnert's case, England in Young's. While both deal for the most part with what happened in the 1960s in the United States, neither addresses himself primarily to an American audience.

Their perspectives are welcome. Now that the Vietnam War is over, Watergate has come and gone, and the bankers are safely back in control of foreign policy, there seems to be a creeping interest in understanding what happened in the sixties and what it all came to in the end. We have needed something in print to supplement Kirkpatrick Sale's *SDS* (1974), a rather journalistic account of that period, which was until now the only major book-length effort to make the whole story available.

Both books treat the New Left most importantly, but by no means exclusively, as an American phenomenon. Mehnert and Young take pains, however, to develop the philosophical roots and practical outcroppings of the Movement outside the United States, particularly in Britain, Germany, and France, but also in Japan, Mexico, and Czechoslovakia. Young is especially strong on the origins of the New Left as an upwelling current in British intellectual and political life in the 1950s. His book is valuable in the first place because it clears up the question of whether the New Left did have ideas after all, which its critics have sometimes delighted in denying.

The New Left materialized as such under the intellectual leadership of a remarkable group of independent academic radicals in England, such as Ralph Milliband, T. B. Bottomore, and Raymond Williams. Their core idea, as Young points out, was actually co-opted from a conservative analysis of the Cold War, one that claimed that the United States and the USSR were in a process of "convergence": Russian Communism and American capitalism were coming to mean much the same thing. Both systems had been badly tarnished in the Cold War struggles and had lost their former ideal purity and moral simplicity. Therefore (ran the early New Left argument), true progressives, classical liberals, humanistic revolutionaries, and libertarians needed to strike out beyond received liberalism and dogmatic Marxism in search of new comprehensions, a new sense of politics, and a new general project for the left. They had to be ruthlessly critical toward Stalinism; wholly independent of the USSR or the CP, and willing to take into account two social factors not satisfactorily accounted for in standard Marxist class analysis, namely, nuclear weapons and big power imperialism.

Mehnert, for his part, stresses the importance in the New Left's formation of certain modern German social philosophers, preeminently those of the famed Frankfurt Institute for Social Research which flourished under the Weimar Republic. He especially emphasizes the influence of Herbert Marcuse, who became something of an issue in American politics in and of himself. But I found myself siding with Young when he argues that much too much has been made of Marcuse's influence on the New Left. Of course, the American New Left read and discussed Marcuse and sometimes embraced aspects of his analysis, but I have never met anyone who read him and was consequently catapulted into politics.

The exaggeration of Marcuse's influence may be rooted in the deeper error Mehnert commits, that of treating the New Left and the "counterculture" as essentially the same. In particular, Mehnert presents several descriptions of the seamier sides of hippie happiness as though they applied to New Left life as well. As a veteran of the Movement I couldn't exactly call this a vile slander; but there was quite a difference between the sort of drug-and-ecstasy-now communes Mehnert saw a great deal of in California and the political communes he seems not to have seen at all in the East and Midwest. An example of the latter, which Mehnert might have discussed, is the Scarlet Clover Commune in Putney, Vermont. For a while, this was the center of a vigorous political and social life for the dozens of organizers who made it their base, washed the dishes without tears, loved the kids, kept the toilets working, and managed to stay free of the yeastier forms of sexual extremism.

Thus, a major flaw in Mehnert's book derives from his having seen too much of California and not enough of the rest; from his being too familiar with what happened in Berkeley and not familiar enough with what happened in Ann Arbor, Lansing, Flint,

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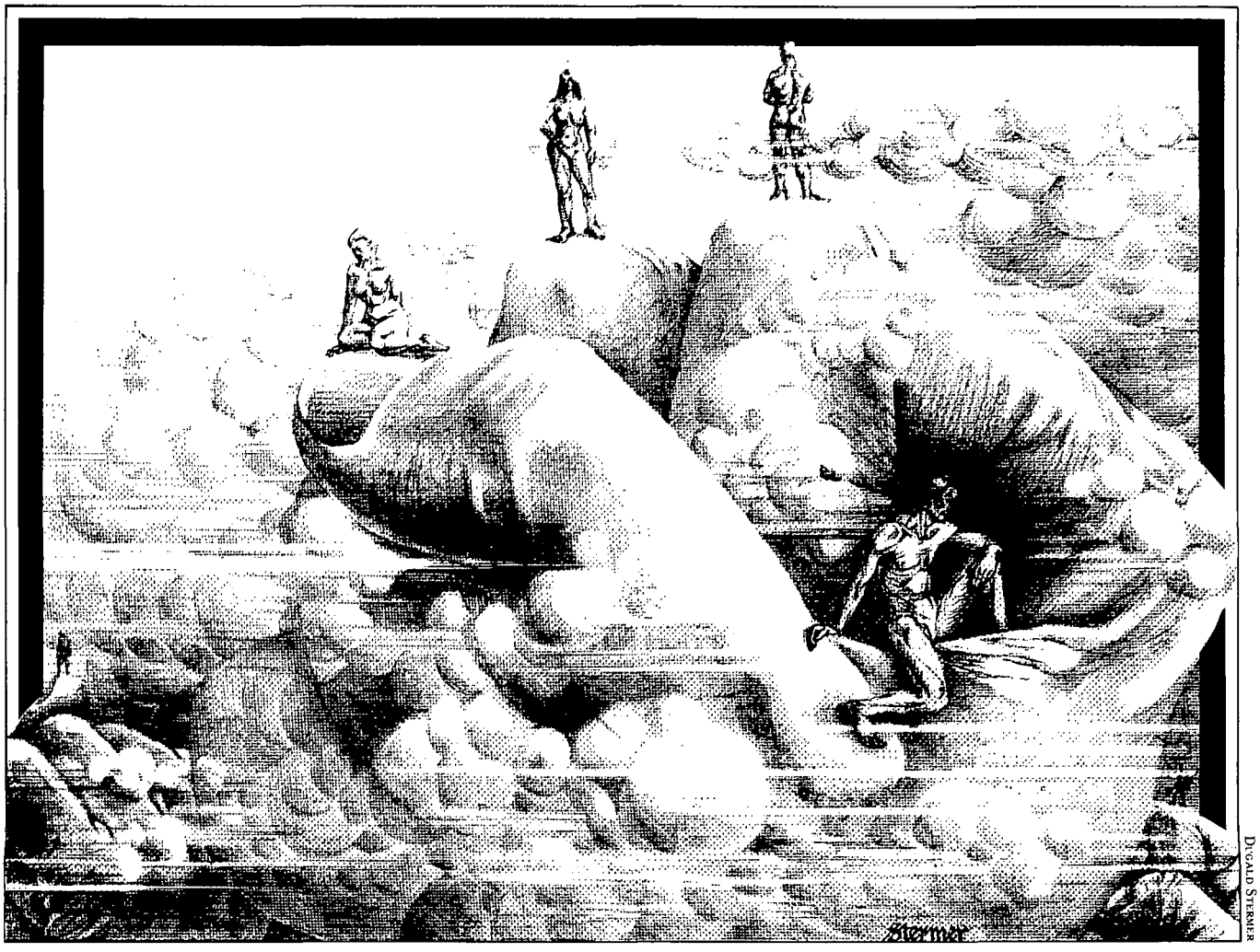
Kewadin, Port Huron, and other places in Michigan, as well as in New York, the Deep South (where SDSers went on duty tours), and the ghettos of big northern cities. Mehnert's account has little sense of the SDS experience as a broad and deep one. And if he had given the eastern and Great Lakes perspectives more of their due, he might have seen California hip in a philosophically less glorified light and with less final disappointment.

Young is much more sensitive than Mehnert to "the initial tension between the hippies and the radicals" and the "difference between changing one's head and changing the system," but even he can say that "the hip and the radical became less distinguishable in a common personalism and emphasis on praxis and life-style." The fact is that the difference between the hip scene and the New Left movement was something the activists were constantly aware of. How could it have been otherwise? The hip thing was fundamentally a mass introspection, a drug-boosted look in. The New Left, on the other hand, went out to the world from a set of shared moral precepts about race, war, and imperialism; it was a recreating of a private moral judgment as a public political act. Of course, the normal hippie's every instinct indisposed him to war and made him wholly eager to demonstrate this, provided that someone else set the stage. But he was satisfied to act without strategic thought, without any sense of political plan, except that the more people there were who smoked grass, the better off the country would be.

This was probably not altogether wrong, and I don't mean to imply that the New Left was against grass or acid. But the Movement saw dope as a mild pleasure, not as a political gesture or a social panacea. And one should not forget that very often the hip subculture put its followers directly at odds with what the New Left was trying to accomplish: it led them to dope up in order to get into the Tarot, astrology, witchcraft, ESP, and the mystic arts, rites, and cons of the Orient. It led them to turn against the discipline of science and to break faith with linear rationality, sometimes making the sympathetically amused New Left organizer want to shout, "Rationality is the only thing we've got going for us!"

It's true that, in the face of Nixonian repression, some of us began to wonder if the path of cultural and psychological change was not the only path for what we were coming to call (prematurely, I always thought) the "post-industrial" revolution. Carlos Castaneda's remarkable Don Juan novels seemed for a while to indicate a method, a way of using humanness, a general direction of development in terms of which one would be happy to be a "progressive" and a "militant" again. For if fighting and winning the revolution meant realizing a "lyric sorcery" like that of Don Juan of Sonora, then who among us could fail to throw his whole heart into it?

But this somehow faded, and there was still the Vietnam War to jolt us daily back into that "separate reality" which was the base of our generation's political experience and identity. By the time the war was over, all that was left for the New Left was to know how it felt to be alone and a has-been in your



DUGALD STERMER

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youth, simply for having been right. In any case, by 1970 or 1971 the New Left was finished, soon to be reduced in the public memory (i.e., in the media) to a few images of violence and self-destruction from the final (tragic?) phase when the Weathermen and Progressive Labor—the militant crazies and the dogmatic crazies—combined to blow the whole thing out.

order to tell technology that it must carry out its agenda on strictly human terms.

The American New Left spoke of the powerlessness of the U.S. citizenry, but we did not *embody* that powerlessness. On the contrary, SDS was a means of "empowerment," and through it a group of otherwise powerless people were able to exert a force on events,

If he had seen less of Berkeley and more of Ann Arbor, Mehnert might have put the phenomenon of California hip into a proper perspective.

HOW, THEN, TO DEAL WITH the underlying motives behind the activity of the New Left? What Mehnert tends to see in every aspect of that activity is alienation, rather than the struggle to overcome and reverse it. Yet the whole appeal of SDS was that it offered a way out of the alienation trap. Yes, New Leftists were "alienated," but not from the American tradition, not from the enshrined national values (freedom, fairness, decency, democracy, lawfulness), certainly not from politics, nor from struggle, nor from life. We were not even alienated from that old bogyman, "consumerism"—we would have been happy to have partaken of the bounties of "the consumer society." Of course—who in his right mind wouldn't be? Nor did our country's storied "materialism" bother us as deeply as commentators made out.

We were "alienated," rather, from the regimes of Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon, two men who nearly everyone now concedes were cynical connivers, lying to us from the Tonkin Gulf to the fall of Saigon. We were alienated (ah, how the old battle cries re-echo!) from racism, militarism, imperialism, and domestic repression. We were alienated from the men and the institutions we saw as shamelessly betraying the best of the American tradition. The New Left was not afraid of modern times. We were not Luddites. If we sometimes seemed to assert a romantic nostalgia for the days of clean water and clean air, that was only in

mostly (not always) for the good. As no less a witness than Nixon would admit much later, it was the antiwar movement that kept the war from escalating past LBJ's mark of half a million American troops in Vietnam; and it was the same movement, then in tatters and in disarray, that continued to restrict Nixon's "freedom of action," that ruled out the option of hitting Hanoi with strategic weapons full force, or perhaps even burning up a demo nuke in the vicinity.

Mehnert gives an excellent summary of the essential facts across the full international range of the 1960s movements, and the book will thus make a handy historical reference. But beyond the flaws already pointed out, Mehnert sometimes spins a picture of the Machiavellian New Left organizer craftily manipulating naive students for hidden ends (for instance, his portrait of Mark Rudd at Columbia in 1968) that I find unrecognizable outside the columns of right-wing hatchet men. And I confess I grew weary of Mehnert's determination not to catch us at our good moments: the sharp intellectual challenge, the jammed and hushed meetings where participatory democracy really happened, the sunsets after actions when you felt something for your fellow creatures you don't feel in the nine-to-five life. Mehnert concentrates so hard on *cultural* analysis, on *cultural* motivation, that he misses the moments of real *political* confrontation with the forces that made our time what it was: the exultation of belonging to the moment of history at its formation, of having an impact on the course of the events that shape your life.

I LIKED YOUNG'S BOOK VERY much. It is very rich, a much more energetic and ambitious work than Mehnert's. His stance is more detached and less personal, and, while Mehnert's mood is reflective, Young's is more theoretical and ideologically assertive. He states, for example: "The NL's libertarianism was genuine but weak, its language retarded, its vision tentative; yet . . . the potentiality for transcendence clearly existed after 1958—and remains even after the recurrent failures of its subsequent history."

As this passage indicates, Young himself is libertarian rather than Marxist in outlook. Indeed, he is writing here firmly in the tradition, in the very language, of the original British New Left. He is sometimes wrong in detail (as when he says that Mark Rudd was one of the presidents of SDS), but mostly he seems to be a solid and thorough historian and an accomplished analyst. Clearly his book should be brought out in a cheap edition. It is the most sophisticated and true-to-life treatment of the New Left that I have seen.

However, I must take strong exception to one of Young's moves: at one point he totally distorts a passage from a 1969 essay of mine on the Weathermen, making it appear that I supported the Weather position on violence. With uncharacteristic misperception he states:

> Oglesby argued for confrontationism on the grounds that, through the repression and reaction it created, it would prove to New Leftists beyond their self-doubt that they were a real threat to the state. He maintained that such a consciousness was only possible for the NL when it had actually provoked repression.

Egad, Young—the essay you cite to prove I held such views, "A Decade Ready for the Dustbin," is in fact—as you seem to see well enough elsewhere—a sustained ironic blast *against* precisely that kind of thinking. My "defense" of revolutionary violence was always aimed at one objective: to keep the (violent) revolutionary of our time from being turned by imperial propaganda into an inscrutable object of hate and fear by a (white) culture that refused to honor the revolutionary motive, the sometime imperative (1776) of social revolution. Never once did I suggest a violent, or even a very militant, position for the Movement. Our proper

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task, I always thought, was to broaden our base, not to intensify our rhetoric. Violence—especially terroristic violence—is inherently elitist, and I am a natural democrat.

Which brings me to one last point I want to make against an idea met in these two books: that the Weatherman breakdown was pure willful self-destruction on SDS's part. There is no space here to go into the fascinating but complex story of SDS's collapse, which was soon followed by the collapse of the entire New Left. As a political foe of the Weathermen—who at one time had been my close friends—I am happy to agree that their leadership helped to destroy the Movement. But before they are finally condemned for their failure to defend the national SDS against the predatory Progressive Labor Party (a group, to be frank, which I always saw as an adjunct of the FBI rather than as the gaggle of young Stalinoids it pretended to be), I think we must look a little closer.

Things seemed irretrievably headed toward violence after the assassinations of King and Bobby Kennedy and the attempted assassination of Rudi Dutschke of the German SDS in the spring of 1968. The election of Nixon seemed to guarantee it. It became an article of faith with the Weathermen that we had entered a phase of struggle in which open, above-ground organizations like SDS would no longer be permitted to function. SDS had seen its day, said Bernardine and Terry and Bill and the rest.

Yes, that was paranoid of them, it was extremist and self-important and premature. But now we know. Now we can look back in certain knowledge that the secret repression so many felt was coming down was an actual fact. Now we know, through Freedom of Information Act releases, that SDS and other left groups were explicitly targeted for destruction by the FBI and the CIA (Cointelpro, Operation MH Chaos). We know that at the same time that Nixon was braying about peace, he was waging secret wars and planning, if necessary, to turn the full strategic fury of U.S. airpower loose against Hanoi. We know now that Kent State could happen—because it did.

The Weathermen were the ones who predicted with fair accuracy the dire things that Nixon almost got away with. Who could have guessed that there would be a miracle called Watergate, a *deus ex machina* appearing out of nowhere, a foiled plot that would give everyone another free pass? In a world in which Watergate had never happened, in which Nixon and Mitchell and Connally endured, the Weatherman fantasy of an underground movement might not look half so pointless or insane as it looks today.

Please note that this does not, for me, justify what they did. The New Left's task, especially in America, was to understand and explain Third World violence, not to imitate it in the metropole; to build a mass movement of weight and authority, not a vanguard of a childish and fatal illusion.

So I fault the Weathermen sorely. But I think it ought to be remembered, better than Young and Mehnert remember, that in the beginning the growth of Weatherism in SDS was a response to a continuing surge of violence in the war and to the escalation of repression of those who spoke and acted against the war. Certainly at least in the beginning, the likes of Bernardine Dohrn and her comrades were not wicked people, only vastly inexperienced. Every time they tried to do something, it was the first time they had ever tried it. Even in making bombs it was, finally, their inexperience, their eerily jaded innocence, that would tell the most dreadful part of the story. ❏

We weren't "alienated" from America, or even from the bogyman of "the consumer society"; we would have been happy to share in its bounties—what sane person wouldn't?

MENCKEN: A Study of His Thought, by Charles A. Fecher. Alfred A. Knopf, 384 pp., $15.00.

More than an iconoclast

MITCHELL S. ROSS

THE LORD OF AMERICAN publishers, Mr. Alfred A. Knopf, announces in the foreword to this study of H. L. Mencken that the work we hold in our hands is "so far and away the best work of any kind I have ever read on Henry as to leave the competition nowhere." Coming from Mencken's close friend and longtime publisher, this is very serious news indeed; one assumes the venerable Knopf whiskers received a long, hard tug before that line was written.

As one who has entertained notions of attempting a major study of Mencken, I had mixed emotions about that foreword—maybe the job had been done at last, and my favorite author, the squat giant of American literature, had been appropriately embalmed on the eve of his centennial. And indeed, having now perused Fecher's devotional essay, I am persuaded that it is better for me to leave off. But is this because Fecher is such a dazzler that any future efforts must seem in contrast to have been hatched from the boobery? Or is it, on the other hand, that Fecher has so astoundingly bungled his assignment that the prospective interpreter of Mencken can only retreat, cigar and cognac in hand, and contemplate the impossibility of the job?

In fact, it is neither. What the admirable Fecher has disgorged is a sensible and clearly written book, one actually worthy of sitting on the shelf beside all those Mencken originals published so handsomely by Knopf. The problem is that, like all the Menckenians before him who have assayed the master, Fecher is at his best when employing quotation marks. I do not say this to imply that Fecher is less than a careful student of his man or is inadequately

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gifted in the art of explication. It is simply that Mencken was the greatest individualist and the most distinctive prose stylist in the history of American literature, and the subtlest critic wrongs him if he does not regard his primary task as a plain setting forth of the record.

Those who have succumbed to higher ambitions—say, a more or less strict categorization of Mencken's life and work—have produced studies which fail to satisfy either the curiosity or the intelligence of the reader. Carl Bode's biography, *Mencken* (1969), comes to mind. It is a book of high earnestness, the result of much scholarly investigation. It is not a bad book, but it is a little dim and dull by contrast with its subject. On the other hand, William Manchester's earlier *H. L. Mencken: Disturber of the Peace* (1962) is far brighter and bouncier; if it is not heroic scholarship, it is at least full of life and capable of delighting the Menckenian. Now along comes Fecher, attempting a dissection of Mencken's thought. Like Manchester but in a separate context, he succeeds only because he does *not* try to penetrate dark secrets and exhume aspects of the man which are not worth bothering about.

Mencken's ideas were formed by his twentieth year and remained essentially unchanged for the rest of his life. There is nothing extraordinary about them: the magnificence of Mencken resulted from his observations of life in the Republic swarming around him. His style made him great, and that style was fairly well formed only a few years later than his ideas. Nietzsche has been credited too heavily in the development of Mencken's thought; what Mencken got from him was far less an idea, or set of ideas, than an attitude. From Nietzsche he learned that the critic could sit high above the mob and send down thunderbolts, that a great style could elevate a mere wordslinger into a literary Zeus. But this attitude might as well have come from Carlyle, or Macaulay, or T. H. Huxley, all of whom the young Mencken studied and employed when he went into business for himself.

BRUCE MCGILLIVRAY

MENCKEN'S EARLY FAME derived from his role as Dreiser's field marshall in the literary wars. His interest held only as long as a public issue—in this case, the right of the artist to represent reality—was at stake. By the mid-twenties, when the Comstocks had been defeated, when Dreiser and his successors were free to publish their books, Mencken was gearing up for the debut of *The American Mercury,* and his interest in new fiction had severely declined. He had addressed his era and done his job. "The best critic," he wrote, "is not that fool who tries to resist the process—by setting up artificial standards, by prattling of laws and principles that do not exist, by going into the dead past for criticism of the present—but that more prudent fellow who submits himself frankly to the flow of his time, and rejoices in its aliveness."

With the Lost Generation coming onto the scene, it was better for Mencken to withdraw. He had little taste for its books, and he saw no reason to belabor the point. He was foremost a public man, a literary politician whose incessant denunciations of democracy constituted an inchoate effort to reform it. In this respect the Mencken scholars have taken the man too literally; they have been scalded by his words, and they have not dared to discern the link between the great debunker and the plodding uplifters who compose "Common Cause" or the indignant professors who sweat out the nuclear age in Americans for Democratic Action. But the desire to reform is not always the itch to uplift; sometimes it is no more than an attempt to eliminate the grotesque and what stands in the way of honest effort. This was Mencken's intention, and after his own fashion he was a fundamentalist.

His issues, it so happened, were common honor, common decency, common sense, and free speech. In America he found these things either in danger or in short supply. Therefore, he concluded that the country was in the hands of asses. Of the Presidents spanned by his active career, Theodore Roosevelt was "blatant, crude, overly confidential, devious, tyrannical, vainglorious, sometimes quite childish"; Taft was hampered by "native laziness and shiftlessness"; Wilson was "the perfect model of a Christian cad"; Harding went down as "the numbskull Gamaliel"; Calvin Coolidge was "a cheap and trashy fellow, deficient in

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sense and almost devoid of any notion of honor"; Hoover had "a natural instinct for the low, disingenuous, fraudulent manipulations that constitute the art and mystery of politics under democracy"; Franklin Roosevelt's "constant appeals to class envy and hatred and his frequent repudiation of his own categorical pledges have stripped him of every plausible claim to the name of statesman"; Truman was no more than "the embattled gents furnisher." Mencken never said a kind thing about a President of the United States, and he was proud of it. Democracy was too shot through with fraudulence ever to produce a President who was not contemptible.

Because Roosevelt II roared loudest and longest, and Mencken hated him most, the enduring political tag hung on Mencken is "conservative." This is a mistake on the order of observing a United States senator and labeling him a public servant. As the senator's primary interest is the maintenance of his office, with any public service he performs being purely incidental, so the point of Mencken's career was to upset the smug assumptions of the established powers. How any man so relentlessly engaged in hooting and firing slingshots can be a true conservative is something that escapes me. The conservative is someone involved in defending an established order of things; Mencken was as unlike such a defender as you will ever find.

Regarding some of his personal values—and perhaps his view of human nature—he subscribed to a vague sort of Toryism, as his defenders and detractors alike have fondly recalled. But his performance belies the label. His diatribe, *Notes on Democracy* (recently reprinted, along with a dozen other out-of-print Mencken texts, in a small edition by Octagon Books), represents his most comprehensive statement on the subject. Do we find here a defense of the status quo? An elucidation of the rights of Church, state, and immemorial tradition? We find nothing of the kind, for Mencken's concerns were of a wholly different order.

Mencken was a reformer in the sense I have described—a man so pained by the bilge water of the ship of state that he endeavored to dump it overboard. He defended those common virtues I have listed, and he poured his contempt on Roosevelt's concept of government as "a milch cow with 125,000,000 teats." But does this make him, in Fecher's phrase, a "dyed-in-the-wool conservative"? I contend that it does not; more than his policies, it was Franklin Roosevelt's chronic lying and demogoguery that infuriated Mencken—the phony patriotism engineered by the Brain Trust, manifested by intimidating businessmen into unfurling banners for National Recovery Act parades.

Remember, this Mencken who detested Roosevelt is the same man who once voted for Eugene V. Debs for President. Debs, imprisoned for his opposition to the First World War, was an honorable man, he thought. The dubbing of Mencken as a conservative is too easily and too cheaply done; it ignores the salient facts of the man's life. If we try to label him politically, we are bound to ensnare ourselves. If we call him a Jeffersonian, we must also admit that he hated democracy. If we hitch his star to classical liberalism, we must add that he regarded progress, by and large, as a delusion. He approached political science in the spirit of a lad heaving dead cats onto the neighbors' porches; his principle delight came from shocking the populace out of its routine assumptions. He was far more the embodiment than the theorist of individuality.

From TR, who was "crude" and "tyrannical," to Truman, who was just an "embattled gents' furnisher," Mencken never said a kind thing about a President—and he was proud of it.

SO, TOO, WITH THE LINE that Mencken was an "elitist," a "snob," or an "aristocrat." These labels come from his frequent assertions, in the midst of his caterwauling, that he spoke on behalf of the "civilized minority." He may have done so, but when it came to language, he was nourished by sources as unlikely as Arkansas newspapers and the *Congressional Record*. His appetite for American prose was gargantuan; it even exceeded his appetite for strangling politicians. As a result, he left behind him artifacts unlike those of any other American writer. Dreiser has been mentioned, and the story of the Mencken-Dreiser connection is often told. Despite the unlikely casting of Mencken in the role of *Heldentenor*, the tale is the stuff of legends. Imagine the novels of Sinclair Lewis without Mencken's influence, and you imagine endless horrid repetitions of *The Job* or *Ann Vickers*, books written before and after the fire of Mencken's influence had spread throughout the Republic. It was Mencken's critical achievement to save the reading public from its puritanical instincts and force it to recognize literature as a matter apart from morality. The preachers are not gone, and they assume fantastic and even alarming disguises today, but insofar as we are able to resist them we are in Mencken's debt.

In his treatment of the national language, Mencken was, forgive him, a patriot. One recalls those early chapters of his magnum opus, *The American Language*, studded with barbed wire designed to guard against the British intruders on national territory. Mencken willed that language, like literature, be allowed to grow freely in these spacious precincts, that it escape the clutches of grammatical policemen and their schoolmarm enforcers.

In all these endeavors he was too highly individualistic to survive any cramming into a category. Even to call him an iconoclast is to miss something of the man. The prevailing view is that to rank him as the American Voltaire is to rank him too highly. If this is true, it is only because the Puritans, professors, and politicians of twentieth-century America were not as bad as the Catholic Church of eighteenth-century France. Instead of Calas and *l'Infâme*, Mencken had Dreiser and the Boston smut-hounds—different battles in different ages. He fought them as well as any man could; because of this, and because of his magnificent prose style, Mencken's position among the immortals is deservedly secure. ❏

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ALLIES OF A KIND: The United States, Britain and the War Against Japan, 1941–1945, by Christopher Thorne. Oxford University Press, 772 pp., $29.50.

Together against the wogs

WALTER LAFEBER

*LIKE OTHER GREAT HISTOR-*ical figures, the more Franklin D. Roosevelt is studied the more interesting he becomes—although not necessarily in the way pro-New Deal historians have supposed. Roosevelt apparently spent considerable time, for example, contemplating the nonwhite races. He thought it proper to joke to two White House advisers in March 1945 that the Puerto Rican birthrate could be controlled by "the methods which Hitler used effectively": "It is all very simple and painless—you have people pass through a narrow passage and then there is a burrrrr of an electrical apparatus. They stay there for 20 seconds and from there on they are sterile."

At Yalta he solemnly informed Stalin that the Vietnamese were "people of small stature . . . and not warlike." They would no doubt delight in being ruled by a United Nations trusteeship. The Japanese, he told friends, were militaristic because they had a less developed skull pattern than Caucasians. Roosevelt speculated that crossbreeding with Europeans would develop more civilized Asian populations.

Unlike some British historians, Christopher Thorne (who teaches at the University of Sussex), does not relate these anecdotes merely to claim that they illustrate the normal run of North American stupidity. He understands that Roosevelt's views were inherited in large part from the motherland. "If India is to be really capable of holding its own in the future," Thorne quotes L. S. Amery, the top British India Office official in 1943, as saying, the Indians will require "an increasing infusion of stronger Nordic blood, whether by settlement or intermarriage or otherwise." Amery left the "otherwise" purposely vague, but Thorne's point is clear: If we want to comprehend one of the most important historical problems of our time—that is, why the United States defended European colonialism long after most Europeans gave it up—we should first understand that Americans shared most of the colonial powers' assumptions about race.

We also shared their views concerning the need for stability rather than freedom, and their fear that a pan-Asian movement would drive the Caucasians back to their homelands. The irony, of course, is that Anglo-American colonial policies helped transform such fear into reality. In this sense, Thorne observes, the defeated Japanese militarists actually gained one of their primary objectives—the ultimate expulsion or neutralization of the colonial presence in Asia—by accelerating and in some cases cooperating with the nationalist forces.

In 1941–1942 FDR had no intention of being seduced by Winston Churchill's nineteenth-century ideas. The Prime Minister referred to the Far East as "those wild lands," but Roosevelt warned that China could become a world power within a generation or two. The President told his advisers to beware of Churchill's mid-Victorian imperialism, and at Yalta FDR schemed privately with Stalin to prevent Western Europeans from returning to certain parts of Asia. Roosevelt even commented to Washington officials that they would have more trouble with England after the war than they were having with Germany during the conflict.

For its part, the British Foreign Office, to quote one policy maker, "discussed America almost as an enemy" by mid-1942. Since the Americans were so effectively undercutting British power in China, London of-

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ficials lamented that their own century-long domination of the Chinese economy had suddenly been replaced by United States control. Roosevelt's secretary of the Treasury, Henry Morgenthau, chortled in 1945 that before Pearl Harbor the world's financial center was in London, but now it could be found at his desk. He and the President earnestly discussed how to wield their new power to check British, French, and Dutch colonial ambitions.

YET IN THE END IT MADE little difference whether the United States or Great Britain controlled China's economy, or—as far as Asian nationalism was concerned—where the world's trading post was to be found. For, as Thorne argues in elaborate detail, American and British officials in Asia seem to have devoted as much energy to fighting each other's postwar plans as they did to fighting the Japanese; by 1945, however, they had reached remarkably similar conclusions about Asian policy.

Their shared racism particularly explains this agreement. American prejudice, moreover, was not limited to yellow skins. General Douglas MacArthur privately scorned Australian soldiers as cowards, and his view spread to Roosevelt and Secretary of War Henry Stimson. (In an amusing passage, Thorne relates that when he published this information several years ago, a minor storm broke over U.S.–Australian relations. U.S. Embassy officials in Canberra, exhibiting more zeal than concern for the truth, tried to rebut his account by quoting MacArthur's *public* tributes to the Australians.)

The prejudice was abetted by the Pentagon's determination to occupy captured Pacific bases for as long as possible. By demanding total control of former Japanese colonies, his military advisers gave Roosevelt's call for decolonialization a hollow ring. Young Ralph Bunche warned in 1944 that "If we free the Philippines on the one hand and take over the [Japanese mandated] islands on the other hand," an "American empire" could develop in the Pacific. We would not be able to insist on a new colonial order, Bunche noted, because our own hands would not be "clean." For that very reason, Churchill egged on the Americans: "You can take the whole Pacific Ocean," he told Washington policymakers in 1945. "Whatever America wants there will satisfy us."

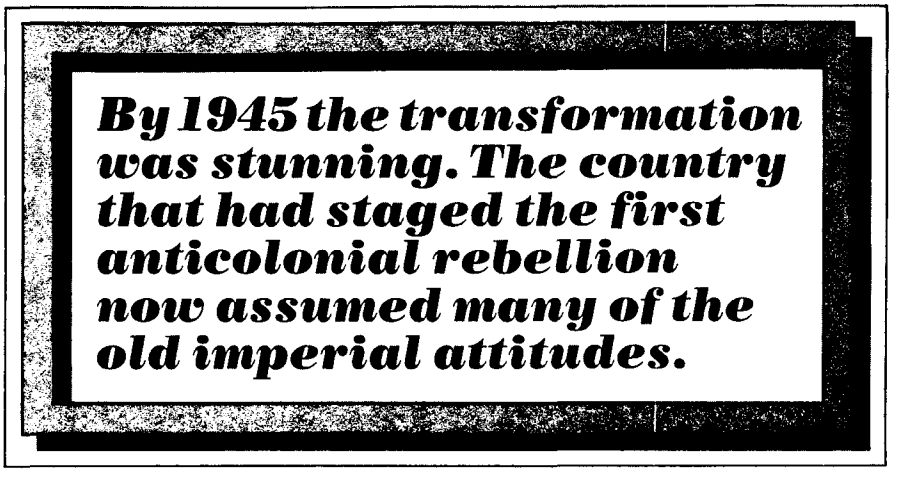
BY THAT TIME THE UNITED States's search for security and stability was also being shaped by the fear of Soviet expansionism. Russia replaced England and the other colonial powers as the number one problem for Washington officials. The fateful link between anticommunism and pro-colonialism was made explicit in 1945 by the State Department's expert on colonies, Isaiah Bowman: "When perhaps the inevitable struggle came between Russia and ourselves [would the United States] have the support of Great Britain if we undermined her position" in India, Malaya, or Burma? An Office of Strategic Survey study answered that rhetorical question. Since a postwar conflict with Russia was possible, the OSS decided, "we have at present no interest in weakening or liquidating" the British, French, and Dutch colonial empires.

In the early war years it was precisely the liquidation of those empires that Roosevelt had planned, so the colonial peoples would not have to erupt into an anti-Western (and antiwhite) revolution to gain their freedom. He hoped they would then show their appreciation by opening their developing markets to American businessmen. By early 1945, however, the racism, the search for security, and the Soviet threat forced FDR to allow the French back into Indochina, stop his crusade against British practices in India, and even sound like Churchill when discussing the future of China. (The American notion that China could become a great power, the British leader wrote privately, was "an absolute farce." And by 1944–1945, Thorne writes, Roosevelt's "exchanges with Chiang became infrequent and more distant, and at Yalta . . . he would be ready to infringe China's interests without consulting Chungking.")

The transformation was stunning. The country that had staged the first successful anticolonial rebellion in 1776 now assumed many of the attitudes of the former master. The results were disastrous, but also darkly humorous. In 1943, Republican Senate leader Arthur Vandenberg of Michigan had berated British Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden as an imperialist, but two years later the senator paid him a good-old-boy midwestern compliment: "Eden is a great guy." As for Roosevelt's successor, the British ambassador reported home in mid-1945 that Harry Truman's "attitude on international questions is, from our point of view, impeccable."

The United States and the colonialists ended the war in remarkable agreement. But ahead of these victors lay a quarter-century of armed conflict with Malayans, Indonesians, Vietnamese, Cambodians, Laotians, Filipinos, and Chinese.

Thorne tells this epochal story with a sure grasp of the global context and the specific Asian problems. His research, which exploits the diplomatic archives and private manuscript holdings of four nations, is extraordinary. Thorne's only major error was in not cutting 200 pages out of the book so that the publisher could slash $10 off the price. This work deserves wide and careful attention, but the 700 pages of small print could restrict the audience largely to specialists (despite Thorne's talent for using apt quotes and anecdotes), and the price could limit the number of specialists who buy the volume to those with inherited wealth. The book is full of ironies; the last one is that because of an inflation triggered by a colonial war, many people will not be able to own this magnificent account of why we started down that road to Vietnam. ❑


By 1945 the transformation was stunning. The country that had staged the first anticolonial rebellion now assumed many of the old imperial attitudes.

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UNEMPLOYMENT IN HISTORY: Economic Thought and Public Policy, by John A. Garraty. Harper and Row, 273 pp., $15.00.

Theory and history

MURRAY N. ROTHBARD

A HISTORIAN WHO DOESN'T understand economics can only write about economic history or the history of economic thought like a behaviorist psychologist dealing with the human mind. He is limited to approaching his topic from the *outside,* as it were, blindly reporting the observed facts without an inner comprehension of what the whole thing is all about. And in framing his conclusions, the historian can, at best, be a judicious eclectic, trying to combine all strands of thought as well as he can. Inevitably, he will end up not totally off the mark, but not very close to the truth.

Unfortunately, this is typical of what has generally happened to historians who have ventured into the economic realm. A case in point is Professor John A. Garraty, a distinguished American historian who here essays a history of economic attitudes toward unemployment and their impact on public policy. Typically, when dealing with the great modern debate between the Keynesians and neoclassical economists, Garraty can only record both points of view. And he cautiously, if lamely, concludes that the Keynesians were basically correct for the 1930s, while the neoclassicals are largely right today, now that the Keynesian nostrums have been pushed too far, and have brought about chronic inflation.

This sort of cautious middle-of-the-road approach is the best that a historian who is ignorant of economics can do; and no one is going to get tremendously angry at this book. But Garraty's method is really not good enough. Not *all* theories are moderately correct, and not *all* theoretical problems can be solved by asserting that each competing theory is partially valid. *Some* theories—even in economics—are just plain wrong; others are correct, regardless of the decade or century we are dealing with.

As a case in point, let us consider how Professor Garraty deals with the hard-money, free-market opponents of Keynesianism in the 1930s. Trying hard to present their views fairly, Garraty stresses Lionel (now Lord) Robbins's theory (in *The Great Depression* [1934]) that the government had been prolonging the Depression by propping up prices, wage rates, and unsound enterprises, and that that had to stop. Specifically on unemployment, Garraty notes the view of Robbins, Ludwig von Mises, and Jacques Rueff (a longtime economic adviser to the French government) that wages must not be artificially kept above the market level, an action which generated massive unemployment. So far, so objective—except that Garraty cannot resist appending a snide sentence: "Their proposals thus required further deflation, although by early 1933 prices had been falling for over three years."

It is true that prices had been falling since 1929, but—remarkably in the history of depressions—they were falling faster than wage rates. This meant that *real* wage rates (wage rates corrected for changes in the purchasing power of the dollar or pound sterling) were going up, thereby generating massive unemployment. None of these hard-money economists advocated further deflation, in the sense either of further contractions of the money supply or of general price levels. On prices, they called attention to the fact that keeping a specific price artificially high can only lead to the piling up of unsold inventory on the shelves and the possible bankruptcy of firms in the industry. On the question of unemployment, they were making the same point with respect to propping up wage rates.

There are other grave flaws in Garraty's treatment of these economists, not so much errors of commission as of omission; thus, he leaves out crucial explanations of their theoretical frameworks. Garraty never explains their analysis of why the Western world was plunged into the Depression in the first place—a topic of equal import to the problem of how to get out of it. While Garraty briefly summarizes other business cycle theories held at the time, he omits the main competitor to the Keynesian theory, the view adopted by Robbins and the others: the "Austrian" business cycle theory of Ludwig von Mises and F. A. Hayek. The Austrian theory, which sees the root of the boom-bust cycle in government stimulus to inflationary bank-credit expansion, is not even mentioned. In fact, Mises is only mentioned briefly, and then not for his business cycle theory. And, astonishingly, Hayek (now a Nobel-laureate in economics), who elaborated Mises's analysis into a full-scale explanation, is not cited at all, even though he was the best-known and most influential opponent of Keynesianism in the 1930s. The great Swedish economist Knut Wicksell, whose theories provide the basis for the Mises-Hayek-Robbins doctrine, is only noted in passing. Garraty fails to discuss Wicksell's major contribution to the cycle theory: his insight into the importance of interest rates and their effect on the cycle.

Not all theories are moderately correct. Even in economics, some theories are just wrong, others right, at any and all times.

The neoclassical economist W. H. Hutt is another glaring omission in Garraty's treatment of the opponents of Keynes. Hutt's notable but unsung *The Theory of Idle Resources* (1939) brought forth the concept of "withheld resources" as an explanation for resource unemployment, including the unemployment of labor.

In the October 1973 issue of the *American Historical Review,* Professor

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Garraty published a highly illuminating article on the Nazi attitude toward the early New Deal. He showed that the Nazis admired the Roosevelt administration for putting much the same corporatist, national-socialist economic policies into effect in the United States as the Nazis were applying in Germany. Admirers of the article who might be expecting its incorporation or expansion in this book will be sorely disappointed. The only remnant of that approach is Garraty's likening of the Civilian Conservation Corps to the Nazi youth camps, since both were designed to mobilize unemployed youths and keep them off the streets.

American academia in the 1930s and 1940s was rife with paeans to Hitler's alleged triumph in having solved Germany's unemployment problem during the Great Depression, and in having done so at a time when the United States and Western Europe were still mired in chronically heavy unemployment. Garraty mentions this achievement, but he fails to offer an explanation. He admits that Germany, scarred by the runaway inflation of the early 1920s, refused to become Keynesian during the Depression. And unemployment had been eliminated by 1936, before any large-scale rearmament program got under way. The missing causal link, which Garraty does not mention, was Hitler's order that German women leave their jobs and go back into the home. Thus, Hitler was able to pursue his women-in-the-home ideals while helping to cure unemployment; for there is nothing that will "cure" unemployment faster (or at least make the statistics look better) than *prohibiting* a large chunk of the labor force from working.

My strictures against history which lacks any sound theoretical base are not meant to be an act of intellectual imperialism on behalf of economics and against history or other disciplines. Quite the contrary; the economist who ventures into the historical arena armed only with a few equations and mathematical razzle-dazzle has wreaked far more damage than the uninspired and slightly bumbling historian. For the economist, particularly the latter-day "cliometrician," aims to flaunt his arrogant "scientific" pretensions of encompassing and explaining all of world history by means of a few mathematical symbols. The economist who knows no history understands far less than his opposite number in the historical profession; but his claims are far greater. Therefore, he is much wider of the mark. A book such as Professor Garraty's may not convey the most important insights into his subject matter; but at least some of the historical record is carefully and fairly conveyed to the reader. The cliometrician cannot even lay claim to that. ❏

THE POET IN THE IMAGINARY MUSEUM: Essays of Two Decades, by Donald Davie. Persea Books, 225 Lafayette St., New York, NY 10012, 322 pp. $17.50.

Rare occasions

HUGH KENNER

TO KEEP TRACK OF DONALD Davie you'd need access to more magazines than most large libraries subscribe to: not only the *New Statesman,* where he reviewed fairly regularly for some 15 years after 1952, but *Mosaic, Prospect, Paideuma, Arion, Agenda,* and more; and if you scan all of them regularly you are busy indeed.

Edmund Wilson erected a massive reputation by restricting his appearances to favored pulpits and collecting much of his journalism into volumes. Davie has a far more interesting mind—Wilson by comparison seems barely able to read—and would already be celebrated on both sides of the Atlantic as the best occasional critic now writing in English if anyone except Barry Alpert, who edited the present volume, had been able to get at the whole of his output: 27 books, 24 contributions to books, 398 periodical appearances as far as Alpert's bibliography takes us. By reprinting 46 of his former teacher's essays (1950–1977, nearer three decades than two), Alpert lets us at last discern what we've been missing: almost the whole of a resolutely single-minded engagement with the poetry of two nations during an era of movements, counter-movements, mindless propaganda, and utter confusion. No other such intelligence was vigilant in that noisy terrain in those years.

Some 15 of Davie's books are collections of verse. We needn't make extravagant claims for his poetry to find validated the axiom that poets write criticism with a special authority. (Arnold, for that matter, was by no means the best poet of his age, but being some kind of respectable poet helped make him its most influential critic.) Even a minor poet with a good mind will find his faculties collected amid chaotic goings-on by the insistent practical question, what is alive here from which I can learn? (Also, what sorts of life, however exhilarating, contain the wrong lessons for me? And what is to be said of the fashions which render authenticities—such as mine—unnoticeable?)

It's questions like those that fletch Davie's best prose. Hitherto his prose books haven't shown his best, his gifts in both poetry and prose being concentrative. The two books on Pound (of which the bibliographer has missed one) suffer from the need to go on worrying a topic after the insights have emerged, and Davie grows querulous when he worries his game too long. The book on Diction and the book on Syntax—indispensible, I can testify, to other critics—also carry these theses further than it's safe for them to go.

But no other critic could have written—I'll open this collection almost at random—"The Poetry of Samuel Menashe," which begins from the rare ability to believe that there could be an interesting living poet of whom one hadn't been told and proceeds to define the elusive qualities of some very short poems most eyes would have skimmed past. I'll linger with this example.

"Samuel Menashe, a man in his forties, lives alone and frugally in New York City," Davie begins. (The date of the essay is 1970; it appeared in the *Iowa Review.*) Menashe, he adds, is also the very devil to "place," since he appears to write in no tradition one can name, and his poems are so short they don't much explain themselves. A few deft paragraphs, and we are considering how literally, for Menashe, his Jewish identity is sealed in his bone structure, his brow, his nose. Then four lines are quoted, "The Niche":

The niche narrows
Hones one thin
Until his bones
Disclose him.

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"For here the two chains of intertwined assonance ('niche, thin, *until,* his, him' spliced into 'nar*rows,* bones, disclose') only point up a surprising rhyme as it were in sense as well as in sound; 'disclose,' the one word in the poem whose first syllable chimes with the 'his' sequence as its second does with the 'bones,' has a meaning that is itself 'disclosed' (unclosed, opened up) as the poem unfolds or flowers towards it. And of course it is all true; the meaning of a word is disclosed to us as we narrow it down. And yet of a word like 'Jewishness,' and of the condition which that word denotes, it is true with a literalness which gives the truth a special intensity."

Not only is this masterly in its specification both of what the poem holds and of how its sounds bind it together, it points back in the essay, and forward: back to strictures on the fashionable or Portnoy literary Jewishness which helps keep Menashe's seriousness unnoticeable, and forward to a surprising adduction of Blake, which saves Menashe from the look of mere floating originality:

"The whole theme of the mystic and yet quite literal significance of the Jewish physiognomy depends for instance on a central Blakean tenet, conveyed up by Blake in aphorism: 'The body is that part of the soul perceived by the five senses.' To a Jewish child who knew his Scriptures only in their English version, Blake's short poems were not merely the logical next step but also the talisman and guarantee that the Jewish experience of exile had been, and could be again, naturalized into English."

And then to the key sentence, the moral of the essay: "If we continue to ignore Menashe, or allow him only the abstracted nod that we give to an unclassifiable oddity, we are in effect saying that he doesn't deserve to profit by the promise that Blake made." (We are also divulging that we aren't serious in our cherishing of Blake.)

*IN ITS COMBINATION OF IN-*tent reading (right in to letter-sounds), apt historical adduction, and willingness to meet a quirky author on his own terms, that essay (by an English-born Gentile) is a model of how to deal with something odd but rewarding; and it is totally undistracted by anxious looks round to make sure that at least some authorities are beaming approval.

Only an Englishman who came here in mid-life could assess the naiveté of our literary opinion, and remind us that a New York Jewish poet can derive from Blake.

Not that Davie has ever been unaware of what the gurus of the moment approve, and there've been times when he's had to trim his utterances carefully in order to safeguard his freedom to utter anything more. No one who made his start in England (where men still get "damned for one intelligent remark") can escape certain habits of accommodation, not unconnected perhaps with the fact that the *New Statesman* contributions which make up some 27 percent of Davie's bibliography account for only three of the pieces collected here.

Still, only one accustomed to gauging the winds every morning could have earned the right he often exercises, to round on the insularity these winds define, the inability to read not just the likes of Menashe but Olson, Dorn, Creeley, Pound himself, yes, even Eliot himself, who in insular innocence of the Symbolist heritage the English persist in reading as though he were a writer of narrative who left things out (see "Pound and Eliot: A Distinction").

And only an Englishman who came to this continent in mid-life (Davie moved to Stanford after teaching in Dublin, Cambridge, and Essex, and he is just about to move on to Vanderbilt) could assess the historical naiveté of American literary opinion, and remind it that a New York Jewish poet can derive from Blake. He's too open to the new, too aware of his first people's insularity, to patronize Americans; it was not to take up the white man's burden that he expatriated himself. But he'll not forget, either, where much of the history of the language we speak was made.

The terminal essay, "English and American in *Briggflatts,*" in addressing itself to the international theme as Davie precisely discerns it, offers a few sentences that can be turned to define his best critical qualities. In the Englishman Basil Bunting, as in the Americans George Oppen and Louis Zukofsky, he finds "a conviction that is wholesome, which the English reader needs to hear about even more than the American does: the conviction that a poem is a transaction between the poet and his subject more than it is a transaction between the poet and his readers."

So, ultimately, is the critical essay, alert to get something right. If unlike the poem it isn't really conceivable without readers whom it can address, still its effort is not to cater to their shortcomings but to afford them opportunities of raising their perceptions to the pitch of its author's, which on rare occasions, such as this book gathers, can be a high pitch indeed. ❑

ELIZABETH BOWEN, A BIOGRAPHY, by Victoria Glendinning. Alfred A. Knopf, 331 pp., $12.50.

A lady's life

WILLIAM ABRAHAMS

AFTER THE DEATH OF A famous, much-admired writer, a process of decline will often ensue: the books go out of print; the reputation goes into a slump; and the name itself, which only a short time before had been trailing clouds of glory, is lost in a cloud of obscurity. This dismal fate is not uncommon, though there are happy exceptions. W. H. Auden, for example, who died in 1973, remains as celebrated as ever. But Eliz-

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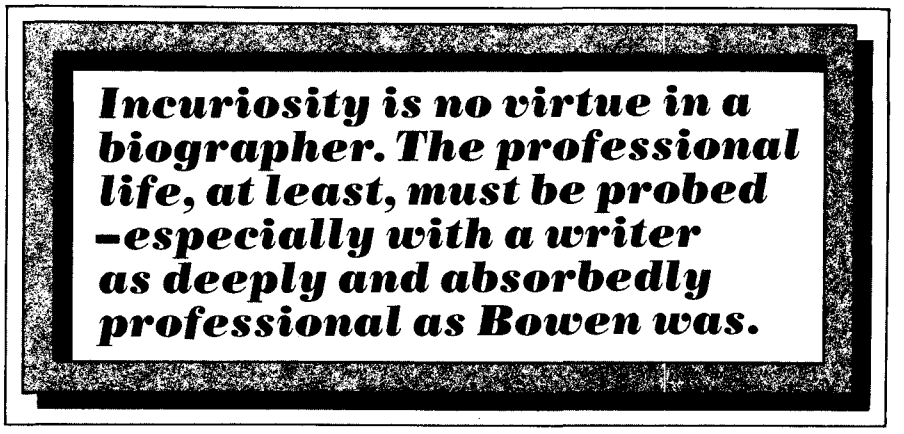
abeth Bowen, that gifted Anglo-Irish novelist and short story writer who also died in 1973, already seems halfway to being forgotten. Only one of her 28 books is still in print, and she makes hardly a dent on the contemporary literary consciousness. Conceivably a Bowen revival may occur; meanwhile, the present state of her reputation is sufficient to explain the oddly combative tone with which Victoria Glendinning opens her authorized biography.

"Why a life of Elizabeth Bowen?" she asks, and goes on to answer in the brisk manner of a reviewer for the *Times Literary Supplement* (which in fact she is, and she is best-known there for her short, sharp reviews of fiction). "At this close remove," Glendinning admits, "her position is a little obscured by the established reputations of writers who precede her and by the impact of contemporary writing. But she is a major writer; her name should appear in any responsible list of the ten most important fiction writers in English on this side of the Atlantic in this century."

Well, this is to claim a great deal. I myself have been an admirer of Elizabeth Bowen's fiction for many years; even so, after reading that last assertive sentence, I jotted down in an irresponsible way a list of nine "important" fiction writers who fulfill Glendinning's qualifications (leaving out writers still alive). I came up with Henry James (the three late great novels belong to this century), Joseph Conrad, E. M. Forster, Ford Madox Ford, James Joyce, D. H. Lawrence, Virginia Woolf, Evelyn Waugh, and George Orwell. Now, it is just possible that the tenth niche *might* be filled by Elizabeth Bowen, rather than by Arnold Bennett or Aldous Huxley or Wyndham Lewis or Ivy Compton Burnett or Kipling or Katharine Mansfield, and if Glendinning had chosen to argue that case, the result might have been a valuable rather than a merely agreeable achievement.

The true answer to the question "Why a life . . . ?" is that Elizabeth Bowen was a writer, first, foremost, and always. Being a writer was the paramount and obsessive thing in her life, and it mattered more to her (and should have mattered more to her biographer) than the social activities that gauzed over the obsession. Her books were of more moment to her (and certainly to us) than, say, the dinner parties and house parties at which she was so deft a hostess, and which are chronicled here with tiring vivacity. Somehow Glendinning has failed to establish her priorities: everything in her subject's life seems to be of equal importance to her. This is not to say that she has assembled a massive post-Strachey tome. When details are easily at hand, she includes them; the effort of extended research clearly does not appeal to her. She glides along briskly, noticing rather than examining things, and the story of a life extending from 1899 to 1973 is told in 301 pages.


Incuriosity is no virtue in a biographer. The professional life, at least, must be probed –especially with a writer as deeply and absorbedly professional as Bowen was.

Elizabeth Bowen's main subject would always be the relations between women and men. One would expect, quite properly, that in a story of her life those relations would be studied with very close attention, not only for their interest in themselves, but for the light they might shed on her fiction. But Glendinning will not look deeply. The depths are dangerous. In her account of Elizabeth's long, seemingly happy, and certainly quite odd marriage to Alan Cameron, she is elusive, chary of detail. Fearful of telling too much, she tells too little. Yet the importance of the marriage for an understanding of what Bowen wrote, and indeed, of why she lived as she did, surely can't be shrugged aside in a few elegant pages.

Elizabeth was 24 and Alan, a minor civil servant who had been badly wounded during the First World War, was 30 when they married in 1923. "Her clothes sense was very astray . . . and he took her in hand. . . . She had very long feet and Alan put her into sensible, expensive shoes bought at Fortnum's; in these and her tweeds he took her for long country walks." There is more of this sort of thing to establish the companionability of the pair. Then, on page 59, Glendinning writes, "Whether she was passionately in love with him when they married is doubtful." There is nothing more on that score; still, one is free to conclude that, after all, many marriges are not especially passionate, which is not to say that they are not, in the ordinary course of events, consummated. So it would seem here. But nine years pass, and on page 106, we arrive at 1933—Glendinning maintains a brisk pace—when, for the first time, "Elizabeth fell in love. However great the strength and nature of the bond that united Elizabeth and Alan, it was not primarily a physical one. The man she fell in love with was brilliant, highly sexed, introspective, susceptible—much too introspective and susceptible to be classed as a cad—and eight years younger than herself. . . . By the time the friendship developed into something more, he was already engaged to be married to someone else."

A love affair is not to be wondered at; what is surprising in the account given here is the disclosure that Elizabeth, after nine years of marriage, was still a virgin: "Her lover believed—as he told his wife—that he had taken Elizabeth's virginity." This is surprising in itself, and it is exceedingly curious in terms of Elizabeth's development as a writer and as a woman. Yet Glendinning remains unruffled and lacking in curiosity. The subject is handled with sugar tongs, so to speak—as is the subject of Elizabeth's lesbian attachments—and then ever so discreetly dropped.

INCURIOSITY, I FEAR, IS NO virtue in a biographer. And while it may be argued that in sexual matters allusion is better than directness, surely in the life of a writer, the *professional* side ought to be paid some attention—especially with a writer who was deeply and absorbedly professional. But details about the publishing of books, about reviews, about editorial advice—all that comes under the head of the professional side—are brushed in very lightly. For example, we are told

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that Cyril Connolly admired Bowen's writing greatly—in a rather abstract sort of way: "Marvellous writer, Elizabeth . . . never could finish one of her books." This is pretty devastating, one would think, but it doesn't faze Glendinning, who adds in an ingenuous parenthesis, "He must, however, have finished at least one—her first novel, *The Hotel*, was the subject of his first-ever novel review for the *New Statesman*." But what did Connolly *say* in that review? Did Glendinning have the curiosity to look it up? In any case, we are not given a clue. And if Elizabeth and Cyril admired each other "enormously," wasn't it odd that Connolly, perhaps the most influential reviewer in England, never again reviewed a book of hers? Why didn't he, and how did Elizabeth feel about it?

Curiosity, no doubt, can be characterized as a form of bad manners: it is not proper or polite to ask too many questions. Elizabeth Bowen, we are told, was "reared in a precarious world in which grace, charm, courtesy, and respect for tradition were valued. She never reneged on these personal values. . . ." Yes, and again, yes, and all honor to her for the splendid, civilized woman that she was. But she was also a writer, a dedicated novelist, an artist, "that queer monster, the artist" in whom a daemon raged, must rage, however skillfully concealed under a façade of good manners. Glendinning concludes her Foreword with a beautiful stanza from Yeats's "A Prayer for my Daughter," with its classic lines,

How but in custom and ceremony
Are innocence and beauty born?

But Yeats also believed in the mask, and he knew what good manners might conceal; he did not pray that his daughter should become a novelist, one who had to deal with the complexities and betrayals of contemporary life. The biographer of an artist does better, I think, to remember Louise Bogan's "Several Voices out of a Cloud":

Come, drunks and drug-takers;
come, perverts unnerved;
Receive the laurel, given, though late,
on merit; to whom and
wherever deserved.

Parochial punks, trimmers, nice people,
joiners, true-blue,
Get the hell out of the way of
the laurel. It is deathless
And it isn't for you. ❏

PLANET OF EXILE, by Ursula K. Le Guin. Harper and Row, 153 pp., $7.95.

CITY OF ILLUSIONS, by Ursula K. Le Guin. Harper and Row, 208 pp., $8.95.

New world for women

NOEL PERRIN

SCIENCE FICTION USED TO be as exclusively a male preserve as the City Club of Atlanta or the U.S. Senate, with this difference: even the most militant feminists had no wish to be part of science fiction. As recently as four years ago, a science fiction course I taught at Dartmouth had 164 students, of which 152 were men and 12 were women. In most science fiction—although perhaps not in the books we read in that course—women tended to figure mostly as sex objects, a role complicated in the illustrations by the fact that their breasts had to show through space suits.

Her great strength is the tendency to understand and to like any hilf-"highly intelligent life form"-whatsoever.

All this is changing with remarkable speed. In the current literature, there are now no roles in which women are not cast. There is nothing surprising about finding in a recent novella like Gene Wolfe's "Silhouette" that the captain of the space ship is a woman (and one of the male officers is her sex object). Nor is Wolfe pulling a mere switcheroo. He's simply imagining that kind of future.

In the world of s-f publishing, the most important new figure to arise in recent years is a woman: Judy del Rey of Ballantine Books. At least according to rumor, del Rey has more to do with the making of science fiction best sellers than anyone else in publishing. And among science fiction authors, the two most interesting to reach maturity in the seventies are Ursula Le Guin and the woman who writes under the name of James Tiptree, Jr. (her real name is said to be Alice Sheldon).

Tiptree and Le Guin are both major talents. Both can do what only a few male s-f authors have managed so far—they can create a dense human situation. And they can also do what all successful s-f writers have done since the beginning—what in fact almost defines the field—they can imagine more profoundly than most of us what kind of world (or universe) may result from the continuing interaction of human beings and technology.

Tiptree is the more limited of the two. In sheer narrative art, she is anybody's equal—at least at her best, as in the novella called "A Momentary Taste of Being." But her imagination circles around only two foci: sex in its transgalactic forms, and the idea of a world without men. (Her long story, "Houston, Houston, Do You Read Me?," though slightly flawed in the telling, is the most powerful imagining of an all-female future world I have ever seen.)

But Le Guin has the power without the obsession. She is one of that rarest of human types: a fantasizer who is also totally sane. She also can imagine a world without men, and she does so in her best-known novel, *The Left Hand of Darkness*. But her planet of Gethen is equally a world without women—everybody is both male and female—and the book manages to illuminate the meaning of each sex.

Le Guin's emergence as a central figure in s-f is currently being marked by the republication of her early work in findable (and reviewable) form. *Planet of Exile* came out as an Ace paperback in 1966. *City of Illusions* followed in 1967, also by Ace. Don't try to find either in the *Cumulative Book Index;* what the editors call "cheap paperbound books"—which means the whole of early s-f—are excluded. And don't think that by consulting the *Book Review Digest* you can find out how they were received, either. "It is not possible to include reviews of paperbound

NOEL PERRIN teaches English at Dartmouth. He is the author of Dr. Bowdler's Legacy: A History of Expurgated Books in England and America.

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Eva Miglioli

books," the editors of that work state firmly. Ace books seldom get reviewed anyway, so the *Digest* editors didn't have much to exclude. But now the early Le Guin is available for review and notice. Both books are out in honorable hardcover from Harper and Row —and they are a welcome addition to the ranks of good literature.

PLANET OF EXILE IS ABOUT a world called Gamma Draconis III, where a group of people from Earth were stranded 600 years ago. (Six hundred earth years, that is. It has been only 10 of the years of Gamma Draconis III, where the trees die every fall, and where a child born in the spring will be an old man or an old woman by the next spring.) The descendants of the earthlings still live on the planet.

Gamma Draconis III was already inhabited when the space ship arrived; and it is typical of Le Guin that she first puts the reader in the mind of a native girl named Rolery, a very likable girl, before you meet anyone of our race. To Rolery, the people from Earth are the "farborn," and they are not, of course, human. To the colonists, the natives are hilfs ("highly intelligent lifeforms")—hilfs with yellow eyes—and they are not, of course, human. Le Guin sets the action just before the eleventh endless winter begins. The trees have already died; the natives, who in summer are nomads, are about to move into their Winter Cities. The story concerns the coming together of colonists and hilfs, after 600 years, united against the winter and against another native race called the Gaal.

Planet of Exile is a profoundly satisfying story, because Le Guin enters so fully into the minds of both groups, and makes you see both as *right*. In the new preface she has written for the hardcover edition, she apologizes because Rolery is not more of a radical feminist and explains that she did most of the writing back in 1963, pre-Friedan you might say. The apology is unnecessary. The ghost of Tolstoy might as well apologize because Anna Karenina is not more of a radical feminist. Rolery's marriage to the colonist Jakob Agat (a fertile union—the colonists' bodies have been adapting to Gamma Draconis for 600 years, even though their minds have not) is far more of a liberation for us human beings than anything NOW has yet dreamed of.

City of Illusions, laid on our own planet in the middle future, is more ambitious but less successful. It is still worth reading. Don't blame Le Guin for the title, incidentally. That was imposed on her by Ace Books.

A stranger with yellow eyes (for the excellent reason that he is from Gamma Draconis III and is in fact a remote descendent of Rolery, though the reader doesn't learn that for a hundred pages) has appeared in the clearing around Zove's House. Zove's House is a kind of fortified farmhouse in the forest, where 44 people belonging to one extended family live together. They maintain, rather precariously, quite a lot of the high technology of our present culture, though North America is now very thinly populated. Their nearest neighbors are at Kathol's House, 30 miles to the south.

As for the stranger, he is a grown man with an empty mind. He has been brainwashed by the Shing, the alien, humanoid controllers of our planet, and then turned loose. They didn't kill him because they have vowed never to take life. This is a vow they keep in much the same way the rulers of the late Byzantine empire kept their promise not to mutilate the bodies God gave us in His image: they would blind political prisoners by holding white-hot iron in front of, but not actually touching, their eyes.

The people of Zove's House accept the stranger, and he lives with them for five years, growing a new mind and personality. Then he leaves. The bulk of the book consists of his adventures crossing the half-empty continent, and they are marvelous adventures. Le Guin is one of the great narrators of journeys. He finally reaches the city of the Shing, which is in Colorado, and there rediscovers his original self. Much less interestingly, he also outwits the Shing.

Le Guin herself, in the preface to the new edition, pinpoints the major problem. As she says, "The book has Villain trouble." The Shing don't work, or at least they work only partially. Le Guin thinks they wouldn't work for anybody, but I believe she is mistaken. A more obsessed author might do very well with an evil race. But Le Guin's great strength is her tendency to understand and to like any hilf whatsoever. "Real villains are rare," she says, "and they never, I believe, occur in flocks." Not convincingly, anyway, in the works of Ursula Le Guin.

Just about everything else in these two books is convincing, though. If you are one of those people who thinks science fiction means one-dimensional characters with blasters, perhaps the best way to correct your false impression would be sit down and read one or two novels like these.

Then you can go on to *The Left Hand of Darkness* and *The Dispossessed.* ❏

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KALKI, by Gore Vidal. Random House, 225 pp., $10.00.

High camp at Armageddon

JULIAN SYMONS

MOST OF GORE VIDAL'S novels manifest two simultaneous but contradictory desires. One is to make clear his deep concern for the fate of nations, in particular the American nation. The other is to maintain his position as an ironic commentator on the latest fads and fashions. But since Vidal is a figure who is essentially part of the absurdities he records; and since the heart of the matter for him is always that he be up-to-the-minute about what's happening today or might happen tomorrow on the West Coast or in New York—how can we ever take him seriously?

Kalki is a novel about the end of the world, by intention a romp that should leave one saying: "Well, something like that *could* happen, although of course it's a bit farfetched." But the manner of the telling is so arch, and marked by so passionate a determination to show readers that the author knows what's what and who's who, that the final effect is of watching a performer in a one-man show who calls for applause after each of his acts. Names are flung around like confetti—Clay Felker, Barbara Walters, Tom Wolfe, Norman Lear, Ross Hunter. Alan Ladd is mentioned for the sake of telling us that a certain character is Alan Ladd, Jr., "a doll and chief of production over at Fox." Et cetera, and indeed et cetera. The characters often think of themselves in terms of cinema. Thus the heroine congratulates herself on a well-played scene: "I reminded myself of Claire Trevor in a Bogart film." Her antagonist, however, "had seen the same movie, and saw himself as the black Bogart." This device is used to make clichés look like witticisms. A little of it is funny, but much more is tedious.

JULIAN SYMONS has contributed to the Times Literary Supplement *and other British publications. His most recent book is* The Tell-Tale Heart: The Life and Works of Edgar Allan Poe.

Trouble begins—trouble, that is, if we consider this book on the level of *1984* and *Brave New World* as the blurb asks us to do—with the narrator, Teddy Ottinger. She is the world's greatest woman pilot, and she is also a bisexual who, after producing two children, had her tubes cauterized. She then produced a book called *Beyond Motherhood*, ghostwritten by a hack named H. V. Weiss. This enables Vidal to have fun by using Weiss's banalities and making jokes about them at the same time. What has Teddy to do with an apocalyptic vision of the future? Why, nothing at all. She is there to provide the chance for a few cracks about sex in the Breckinridge mode.

Teddy is asked by an editor (a former subordinate of Clay Felker, perhaps unidentifiable to those in the Vidalian swim) to interview a new prophet who calls himself Kalki, although he is known to be a former GI named Kelly, who is or has been mixed up with the drug traffic. Kalki has never been interviewed, and Mike Wallace is homing in on his Katmandu ashram for CBS's *60 Minutes*. Can Teddy beat Wallace to the interview? She can, and does. She also falls sexually for both Kalki and his mate Lakshmi, formerly Doris Pannicker from Silver Spring, Maryland. Teddy's tests for sexual attractiveness are a "certain curve to the inner thigh" in women, and a particular tone of voice in men. "Kalki's voice was a baritone that shaded off into bass. I was now turned on. The dial had been switched. All systems go." Kalki-Kelly tells her that he is Vishnu, the highest of the high, and also Siva the destroyer. He will destroy the world very shortly. Only Perfect Masters will be preserved, and he offers to make Teddy a Perfect Master.

It would be tedious to follow the farcical plot through to its conclusion, and unfair to such elements of surprise as the book contains. Among the jokes for which the author works so frantically, there are a few good ones. There are also moments of perceptiveness, as when Teddy goes to a class of Kalki-worshippers and reflects:

> Yes, the seventies were a perfect time to start a religion. If you are born knowing that you don't really exist, that there's nobody home, why, then let god—any god—fill up the empty space.

Very true: but it is not part of Gore Vidal's purpose, nor indeed is it in his nature, to concentrate on this or any point for long. When, three-quarters of the way through this book, the world has been depopulated of all but Kalki and the Perfect Masters, there is no attempt to envisage what such a world might really be like. "The world" hardly enters into this view of the future, which is concerned almost wholly with the United States, and there with the pleasures of living in an empty White House, having dinner parties at the Sherry-Netherland, and taking clothes from Bergdorf Goodman and Saks. The purpose of the whole exercise proves to have been to make a Vidalian sexual joke, and the book ends with neither bang nor whimper, but merely a nihilistic snicker.

For Vidal the heart of the matter is to be up-to-the-minute on what's happening in New York or California. He is thus a part of the absurdities he records.

The kind of comparison the blurb rashly evokes is very damaging to Vidal's pretensions. Admittedly, like *Kalki*, Orwell's and Huxley's books are both thin in characterization; it may well be that the nature of a utopian novel does not permit too distinct a development of character. But *1984* and *Brave New World* are real, imaginative attempts to envisage a different society, a whole new world. By comparison, *Kalki* is parochial, a squib whose points of reference will have been forgotten in a few years. The book's basic failure is that of Gore Vidal's other fantastic novels: it tries to substitute tricks for imagination. ❏

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THE PLAGUE DOGS, by Richard Adams. Alfred A. Knopf, 390 pp., $10.95.

The quality of mercy

JOHN GORDON

READERS WHO ADMIRED the allegorical elements of *Watership Down* will find a lot more to admire in Richard Adams's latest book, *The Plague Dogs,* in which the message has been placed front and center. Two dogs, Snitter and Rowf, escape from an "animal research" center, where they have undergone gruesome experiments, and rove around England's Lake District. They team up with a fox and have a number of encounters—mostly bad—with humans. Meanwhile, the world intervenes. A reporter from London's yellow press—no press anywhere is yellower—uses the dubious possibility of plague infection to raise his paper's circulation, shake up the government, and bring the BBC, a cabinet minister, and several hundred paratroopers down on the animals' trail. There is an extremely satisfactory climax with a couple of good twists which I will not spoil by revealing.

Adams is a skilled storyteller, but he is after more than a story here. The book's villains are meddlers and mad doctors, the literary descendants of the Academy of Lagado and the Circumlocution Office, of the managers of *Brave New World* and *1984*—the blundering, brutal system-builders and functionaries who can't see, and don't care, what they're doing to the world. Some of the best passages of the book are in the chilly-furious vein perfected by Swift:

> They searched the cat block, where cats were kept permanently in hoods covering their eyes and ears (in order to discover the effect upon cats of being kept permanently in hoods covering their eyes and ears). Here there was little noise or movement. Rowf, however, became fascinated by a single voice which kept repeating, "Oh dear, oh dear oh dear," in a tone expressive rather of worry than of actual suffering. . . .

This is a strong attack on vivisection, and it will probably be received according to how the reader feels about that issue. You do not have to be especially sensitive to be unsettled by some of the experiments reported, evidently without exaggeration, in this book. There are, no doubt, intelligent and well-meaning people who feel complacent about the systematic torture of mammals and birds, but they are not the intelligent and well-meaning people on whose charity I would care to rely in a crisis. The rest of us will be made uncomfortable. As if to acknowledge our uncertainty and join us in it, the author—rather awkwardly—offsets his own position near the end: he brings in a dying little girl whose life might be saved as a result of one of the awful cancer experiments described at the beginning. The issue is complicated, and the only real villains are the mechanical-pencil types who think it isn't.

Even those in complete agreement with Adams on vivisection, however, may have trouble with some of the allegorical ramifications that go along with his position in *The Plague Dogs*. Not once but at least three times (he is not interested in being subtle; he is interested in being heard), he equates the kinds of things being done to his dog heroes with the kinds of things done in the German extermination camps. I do not accept this equation, and I don't like it. It's like being back in the sixties, during the worst of the Vietnam War debates: people sitting around calling each other Nazis. The sensation is increased when Adams allows his parable to refract into complaints about modern life: journalism, bureaucrats, permissive education, loose sex, lazy union workers, Parliament, young people with no respect for their elders—damn near everyone. There is even a vulgar little aside from Al Capp-land about student radicals who don't take baths, and there is one incredible passage—the editor who let it slide is no true friend of Richard Adams—in which a bunch of striking union louts proclaim that the environment can go to hell so long as they get enough money to drink and smoke and gamble.

EVIDENTLY THERE IS A BIT of the crusty Tory fussbudget about Adams. One imagines him stumping around London in tweed and puttees, dreaming of his native gorse, brandishing a blackthorn, and muttering that what they ought to do is cane the lot of 'em. But such people at least possess integrity and courage, and when these virtues are combined with a storyteller's gifts, there is a chance that the reader will be moved, as well as unintentionally amused. And *The Plague Dogs* can be very moving. Rowf and Snitter are no less irritating than most literary innocents—they tend to act and talk like television children. But I defy you not to root for them by the end, or not to ask the questions the author wants you to ask about the humans around the edge of the arena. The single most important question, unspoken but present throughout, is Lear's: "Is there any cause in nature that makes these hard hearts?" The answer is given in the book's epigraph, from *Cymbeline*:

> QUEEN: I will try the forces
> of these thy compounds
> on such creatures as
> We count not worth the hanging,
> but none human. . .
>
> CORNELIUS: Your Highness
> Shall from this practice
> but make hard the heart.

Macaulay said that the Puritans ended bear-baiting not because of the pain to the bears but because of the pleasure to the spectators; *The Plague Dogs* says that they were right, at least, about the spectators. Simply, men ought not to enjoy or be accomplices in the torment of other beings. Moral oblivion cannot be selective, and denying reality to parts of creation denies it to parts of yourself. So we get the disembodied "whitecoats" of *The Plague Dogs*, representing a culture with the curious habit of referring to "experts" the questions about life and death, right and wrong, that nothing but the informed heart can decide.

John Noonan, the scholarly and articulate opponent of abortion, has argued that we ought not to be embarrassed—once all the questions of definition and line-drawing have been argued through—about asserting the visible humanity of the fetus, its formative fingers and toes and compelling helplessness, in deciding whether to abort it. Would any other age have needed to be told that? *The Plague Dogs* asks for essentially the same thing, that people look at what they are doing. It isn't a modern *King Lear* (although sometimes it seems to want to be); it isn't a panoramic anatomization of the way modern institutions cauterize and coarsen the heart (it probably wants that too); but it does tell a good story in the process of recalling certain truths that few people, at least until very recently, have been willing to hear. ❏

JOHN GORDON has written for Ramparts, The James Joyce Quarterly, *and other publications.*

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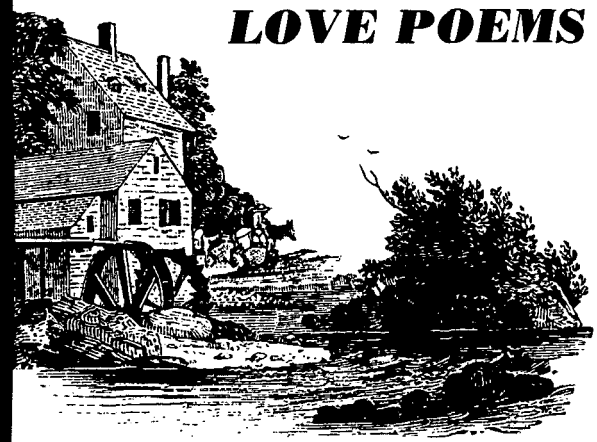
THREE LOVE POEMS



Ox-bow

The time is at an end.
The river swirled
Into an ox-bow bend, but now
It shudders and re-unites:
Adversary! Friend!

Adverse currents drove
This pair apart.
A twin tormented throe embraced,
Enisled between them, one
Quadrant of earth, one grove.

Now for each other they yearn
Across the eyot
That the peculiar flow of each
Carved out, determined. Now,
Now to each other they turn,

And it is past belief
That once they forked;
Or that, upstream and bypassed, trees
Mirrored in mid-reach still
Break into annual leaf.

DONALD DAVIE

DONALD DAVIE is the author of numerous volumes of poetry and criticism, including his Collected Poems, 1950–1970, *published by Oxford University Press.*

A Late Anniversary

Constant the waterman
Skims the red water
Of sunset river,
Singing to Marian
The miller's daughter.

Wharf nor weir on this
Stretch of the river, it pours
Mournful and nebulous, Time's
Unseizable accomplice.

Sing to her, waterman.
Woo her unfaltering,
Constant as best you can,
Self-same by altering.

Your traffic is yourself:
The sidelong pour off a shelf
Or the popple about a stone.
It is what she would wish,
You have to think.

No Epitaph

No moss nor mottle stains
My parents' unmarked grave;
My word on them remains
Stouter than stone, you told me.

"Martyred to words," you have thought,
Should be your epitaph;
At other times you fought
My self-reproaches down.

Though bitterly once or twice
You have reproached me with how
Everything ended in words,
We both know better now:

You understand, I shall not
If I survive you care
To raise a headstone for
You I have carved on air.

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STRAIGHT TIME, directed by Ulu Grosbard.

MADAM ROSA, directed by Moshe Mizrahi.

Straight on target

STEPHEN HARVEY

"NOW THE LUNATICS have taken over the asylum," some anonymous show business wag proclaimed back in 1919 when Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Pickford, and Charles Chaplin founded United Artists. Ever since, movie moguls have been muttering such sentiments about those luminaries eager to grasp power to go along with the glory of stardom. Of late, more and more prominent actors have been using their box office clout to wield control, financial and otherwise, over the films they appear in by producing those vehicles themselves.

Of all these *coups de théâtre,* none has been more visible to the public than that wrought by the production company called First Artists, thanks to the formidable roster of talent it represents, which includes Paul Newman, Barbra Streisand, Sidney Poitier, Steve McQueen, and Dustin Hoffman. Naturally, performers aren't necessarily any more infallible than their erstwhile employers, and more than once First Artists' entries have descended to the glossy narcissism epitomized by the likes of Streisand's *A Star is Born.* Fortunately, *Straight Time,* Dustin Hoffman's latest film for the parent firm, is another matter entirely; in fact, it's an object lesson in the good work than can result when an intelligent performer takes responsibility for the product his name is used to sell.

STEPHEN HARVEY, INQUIRY's film reviewer, is coordinator of the film study program, Museum of Modern Art, New York City.

Straight Time is nothing more than the modest portrait of an unregenerate small-time felon, traced from his parole through the downward curve that inevitably leads him back behind bars. It's more than likely that without the persistence and heft of someone like Hoffman, such a cool-headed treatment of a nontrendy subject like this would never have gotten past the option stage. In choosing this role for himself, Hoffman shows a shrewd sense of where his own strength as a film actor lies. He is both physically and, it seems, temperamentally destined to represent life's schlemiels on screen, and he has the rare ability to do so without that telltale air of movie-star slumming. All the physical details with which he constructs the role—the outdated sideburns and handlebar mustache, his shuffling gait, the faded flash of his polyester wardrobe—effortlessly crystallize this character without ever calling undue attention to themselves. From the movie's first glimpse of Hoffman—climbing into a truck leaving San Quentin, his eyes betraying the weary nonchalance of someone who's been through this countless times before—his performance is unerringly on target, so much so that it rejuvenates a plot that harkens back to those distant days when Spencer Tracy was condemned to 20,000 years in Sing Sing.

Hoffman rejuvenates a plot harkening back to when Spencer Tracy was condemned to 20,000 years in Sing Sing.

Thankfully, Hoffman also lacks the common movie-star compulsion to remain lovable at all times. If anything, *Straight Time* takes advantage of the sympathy audiences bring to an actor like Hoffman in order to confound their expectations. When Hoffman, as parolee Max Dembo, applies his most earnest manner to implore that he be trusted to lead a conventional life, the audience resents his parole officer's wariness; subsequently, the viewers recoil with Dembo at the stammered plea of his crony's wife to leave them alone lest her husband succumb to temptation again. Yet it's soon clear that both characters speak from grim experience; while it's the weaselly rectitude of his appointed keeper that sets Dembo off, his inner store of violence could be detonated by anything at any moment. He's irresistibly drawn to theft and subterfuge, not just because this life is more glamorous and lucrative than the petty straight jobs he's equipped for, but just as surely because it's illegal and therefore tantalizing in itself.

Dembo is a mass of contradictions which Hoffman manages to make perfectly comprehensible. He's merciless to anyone who deviates from his unwritten code of honor among thieves, yet he's incapable of being honest with himself or anyone else. He sees no contradiction whatever in promising his girlfriend to keep her out of his shady affairs, and then dragging her along for his doomed getaway after his last botched attempt at armed robbery. At the same time, for all his supposed loathing of prison, Dembo's crimes are so clumsily executed that each one seems almost calculated to get him behind bars again.

All of us have done time with Garfield, Bogart, and Cagney in the Warner Brothers' penitentiary, and titles like *They Made Me a Criminal* told us clearly where to direct the blame. Although the structure of *Straight Time* is so reminiscent of those films that you expect to hear those fatal Max Steiner chords at every climax, the movie evades the sentimentality that clings to the movieland thug from the Depression up to movies as recent as *Cool Hand Luke.* If *Straight Time* has a thesis, it is that while Society (with a Capital S) may be powerless to rehabilitate people like Dembo, it can't be held responsible for the fact that they exist: there's an eternal moral underclass, the members of which are propelled by their private compulsions into alternate cycles of crime and incarceration. This attitude is, of course, arguable, and in some respects it is just as deterministic as the crocodile tears liberalism it's supplanting. Nonetheless, it is refreshing to see this viewpoint presented so candidly, and the understated naturalism that permeates *Straight Time* makes it all the

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more persuasive.

Having usually worked in the theater up until now, Director Ulu Grosbard's visual style might best be described as unprepossessing, but he obviously has a remarkable way with actors. Everyone concerned does commendable work, from Harry Dean Stanton and Gary Busey as Dembo's ill-fated accomplices, to Emmet Walsh as the beefy personality kid who is Dembo's particular nemesis. As Jenny, Dembo's steadfast girlfriend, Theresa Russell is particularly remarkable under the circumstances. Hers is the one role in the script which succumbs to the usual genre clichés—namely the passively adoring, eternally unquestioning moll immortalized by Ida Lupino in *High Sierra*. The obligatory prison visit routine is so moistly written that even Sylvia Sidney might have gagged. But Russell makes the role work, by playing Jenny as the archetypal blissed-out California kid, vague grin, slurred consonants, and all. If she were slightly higher on the evolutionary scale, a girl like Jenny would probably have ended up as a rock music groupie, but things being as they are, Dembo is probably about the best such an aimless type could hope for.

Waxing sentimental about prostitution must be the world's second oldest profession.

Ironically enough, Hoffman's control over this project may have proved an illusion after all. Since its release, Hoffman has sued everyone in sight over what he has deemed to be an unsatisfactory final cut. Of course, it's impossible to know precisely what has been omitted from the released version, but *Straight Time* abounds with unexplainable gaps. (It's particularly baffling that the movie takes great pains to establish the parole officer's implacable pursuit of Dembo at the outset, then abruptly drops the character entirely when Dembo double-crosses him halfway through the movie.) Nevertheless, Hoffman has a right to be proud of what remains of the original concept; *Straight Time* proves that in the right hands, the film industry's penchant for the star vehicle can be turned from a necessary evil to a positive virtue.

CONSIDERING THE FUROR ignited by Vanessa Redgrave's remarks during the recent Oscar broadcast, it's amusing to note that the Academy bypassed both Bunuel and this year's obligatory Israeli nominee (something called *Operation Thunderbolt*) to bestow the foreign film award on *Madam Rosa*, that cozy fable of Jewish-Arab ecumenism. "Warmhearted" and "uplifting" are the words that are supposed to come to mind in describing this tale of an ex-whore and Holocaust survivor (Simone Signoret) who has been reduced to nursemaiding the multicolored offspring of a younger generation of streetwalkers; but to my mind, adjectives on the order of "glib" and "calculated" would be more appropriate. Waxing sentimental about prostitution must be the second oldest profession, and director Moshe Mizrahi doesn't miss a trick. His movie determinedly exudes a kind of sub-Truffaut sunniness—the people in Madame Rosa's world are unfailingly kind and solicitous (especially those nice Arab boys downstairs who treat her to an outing in the country)—and wouldn't you know that the *deus ex machina* who retrieves her prize ward (likewise Arab) would turn out to be a warmhearted moviemaker?

Lord knows it could have been a lot worse—had it been made here, a property like this would have been turned into a six-hour prime-time mini-series featuring Shelley Winters in the title role. At the very least, Signoret brings all her considerable craft to the part, nobly resisting the temptation to stoop to the kind of bravura shtick the role practically begs for. Although the years have not exactly been kind to her, Signoret still doesn't seem old enough for the role; it's hardly her fault if she emanates too much intelligence to be convincingly senile in the bargain. Yet her performance is a marvel of economy; she lets her weary bulk and crisp hull of a voice do most of the work—anything more would have been extraneous, and she obviously knows it. The restrained byplay between Signoret and a gifted, solemn-faced youth named Sami Ben-Youb prevents *Madam Rosa* from careening headlong into bathos, but although these two make the movie palatable, I still didn't believe a minute of it. ❑

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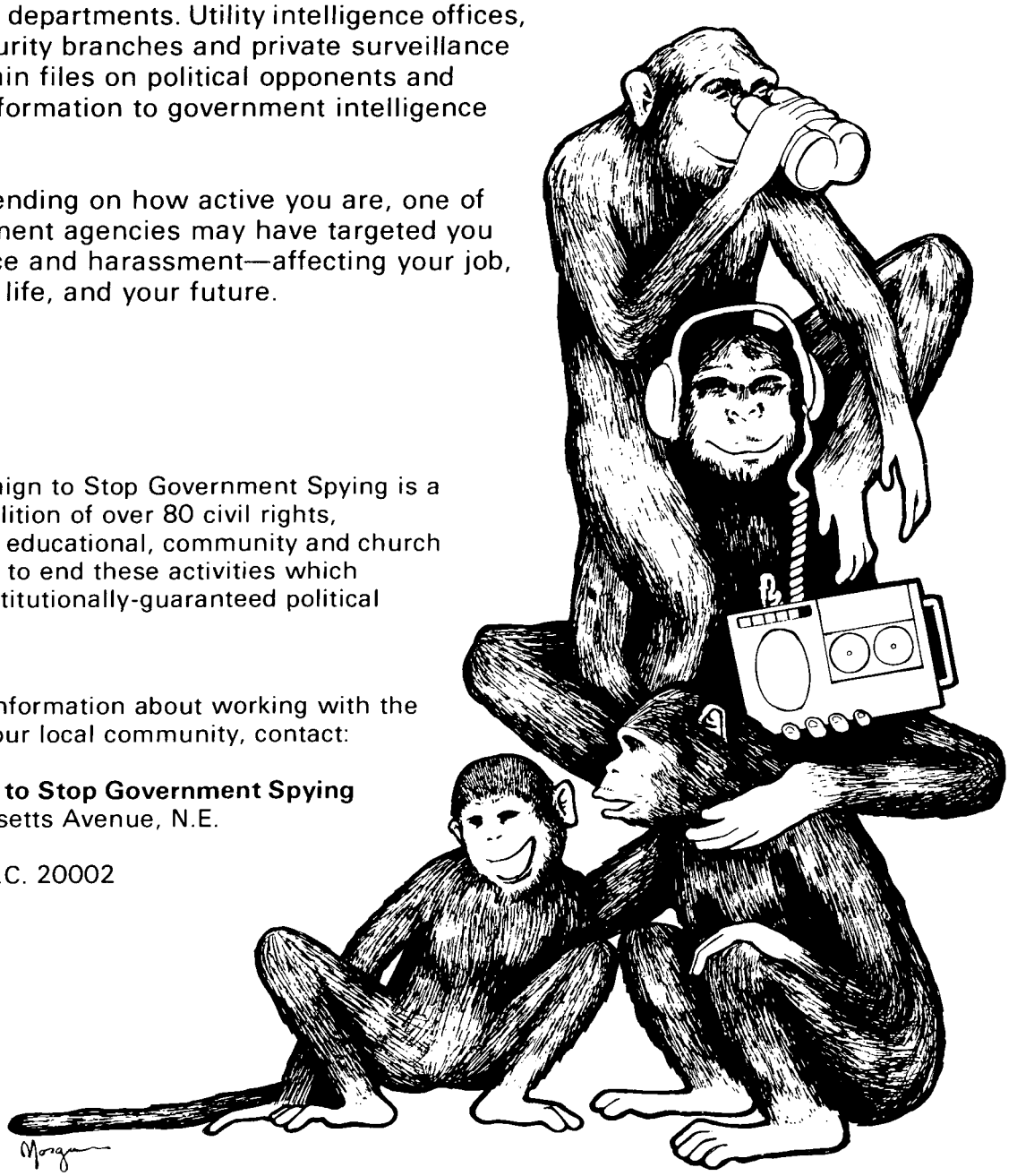

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